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Industry's Toughest Bosses Are Demanding Executives

By Dom Serafini

Stories about tough, demanding, unreasonable bosses abound worldwide. There are stories of executives who threw chairs at their underlings and others who just launched videocassettes. There are also those who are screamers, and others who use antics. One former U.S. studio executive recalled that, during a tense negotiation, a counterpart started to scream at him, which prompted the question, "Do you want to settle the matter or do you want to scream?" The quick reply was, "I want to scream!"

This report was in the works well before the recent announcement of New Line movie *Horrible Bosses*, starring Jennifer Aniston and Jason Bateman, even though the project was originally written in 2005. Perhaps, the forerunner of

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"Watch it, here comes the boss."

Big Program Acquisition Figures Can Be Deceptive

TV biz in the U.K. is changing, again!

By Bob Jenkins

During the past summer, there were a number of program acquisitions in the U.K., which, to the casual observer, might suggest that Europe's second largest television market (after Germany) was still a happy hunting ground for foreign companies with content to license. At the end of July, BSkyB announced the exclusive acquisition of the entire HBO catalogue, as well as all of the U.S. pay-TV giant's future output for, reportedly, the next five years.

This will give BSkyB, Rupert Murdoch's British pay-TV giant, access to recent seminal hits such as *The Wire*, *True Blood* and *The Sopranos*, as well as many eagerly anticipated television

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Difficult Shows To Sell Don't Have A Common Denominator

By Erin Somers

When it comes to selling TV programming, it must be said that all shows are not created equal. While some shows are effortless international hits, others prove to be thorns in sellers' sides. But what are the mysterious factors that make a show difficult to sell?

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U.S. Studios Share The Int'l TV Pie

Hollywood studio executives are reluctant to talk about market shares of their international TV divisions. In order to generate an estimate of this year's figures, *VideoAge* was told by former studio executives to look at the U.S. box office grosses of three years ago. And that was exactly what we did, naturally adjusting figures for CBS Studios because it no longer releases theatrical movies since it separated from Paramount.

Marion Edwards, president, Television Distribution, Twentieth Century Fox TV Distribution, was one studio executive who gave us some insight: "Fox has been pretty lucky, so I think our market share will be stable: Between Warner Bros. and Fox, we control much of the U.S. programming. But that's driven by the amount of content we drive into the market. We have a lot of content for cable and network. So I would assume we have the second largest amount of content."

Armando Nuñez, Jr., president, CBS Studios International, added: "There continues to be a high demand for U.S. produced programming. We feel strongly that our new series as well as our extensive library provide a great potential for growth as the available shelf space for programming is expanding with the digitization of television."

Reportedly, the major U.S. studios

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Ethnic TV Celebrated

The 24th annual conference of the U.S. National Association for Multi-Ethnicity in Communications (NAMIC), held last month at the Hilton Hotel in New York City, attracted a roster of top-level panelists, including FCC commissioner Mignon Clyburn; Cesar Conde, president, Univision Networks; Patrick Esser, president, Cox Communications and Sean Cohan, SVP International, AETN, for a total of 88 executives. The conference was held in conjunction with the Association of Cable Communications' Forum 2010.

Topics included "Shift in U.S. Demographics," "Multi-Ethnic Content," "Hispanic America," "The Reinvention of Content Consumption," and the like.

The conference awards for "Excellence in Multi-Cultural Marketing" went to Time Warner Cable Los Angeles, HBO, International Media Distribution and Turner Entertainment Networks.

As part of the "Diversity Digital Demographics" theme, NAMIC presented the seminar "Emerging Technologies and the Strategic Implications for the Broadcast Industry," moderated by CNN Worldwide's Kay Madati, AETN's Sean Cohan, NBC's Devin Johnson, MTV's Pooja Midha, Bloomberg's Oke Okaro and Disney ABC's Nichole Smith.

The consensus was that the digital TV sector "is upgrading from digital pennies to dimes." This in response to the question of whether it is good business to give up analog dollars for digital pennies.

Plus, all TV companies have to go digital because one "cannot afford not to," but AETN's Cohan pointed out that the international growth will come from traditional (linear) platforms.

Finally, all digital platforms get their content from the linear channels, so it's "basically for free."

The only drawback is that it's difficult to plan ahead for more than six months at a time, when technology changes so rapidly.

Founded in 1980, NAMIC counts 2,000 members in 18 U.S. chapters nationwide.

Pictured below are AETN's Sean Cohan, CNN's Kay Madati and NBC's Devin Johnson.

CCI's Falzon Has Two Chairs

Charles Falzon, co-chairman of Toronto, Canada-based Cambium Catalyst International (CCI) Entertainment, accepted a position as chair of the Ryerson University's School of Radio and Television Arts (SRTA), which is based in Toronto.

In his new role, Falzon will manage the school's academic and operational affairs, and he will work with faculty and staff to promote industry-related research and launch scholarships. Falzon is interested in working with the Dean of the Faculty to forge academic and industry partnerships nationally and internationally, thereby strengthening the ties between the SRTA program and the industry. Prior to taking on the position, Falzon worked as an instructor in the SRTA program.

He will continue to serve as co-chairman of CCI Entertainment — an independent production, distribution and licensing company — strengthening his efforts to develop corporate strategy and co-executive produce various projects with Arnie Zipursky, CCI co-chair and CEO.

Before he began working for CCI, Falzon served as president of Gullane Entertainment, a U.K.-based multinational public company, where he was responsible for commercial activity. He has also engaged with advisory committees such as The Jesuit Communications Project, Banff Film Festival and the Canadian Film and Television Production Association, which he chaired.

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Marinho at Brazil's ABTA

Last August, the annual ABTA's trade show in São Paulo, Brazil, featured Globo Organization's CEO Roberto I. Marinho as its keynote speaker.

ABTA is Brazil's association of pay-TV and broadband operators. The trade show and conferences were held at the Transamerica Expo Center and attracted close to 9,500 participants.

The three-day event that ended August 12 included a trade show with 97 booths and featured 20 conferences covering regulation, programming and technology.

Brazil's pay-TV market is considered one of the world's fastest growing businesses, averaging a growth of 15 percent a year since 2003 and now

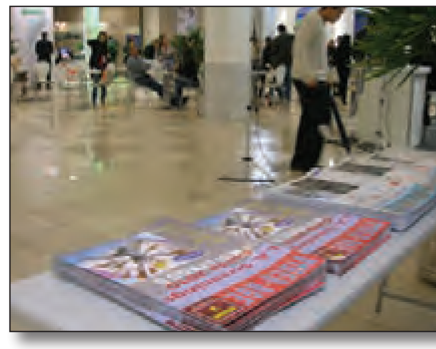
numbering 7.8 million subscribers generating annual revenues equivalent to U.S.$500 million.

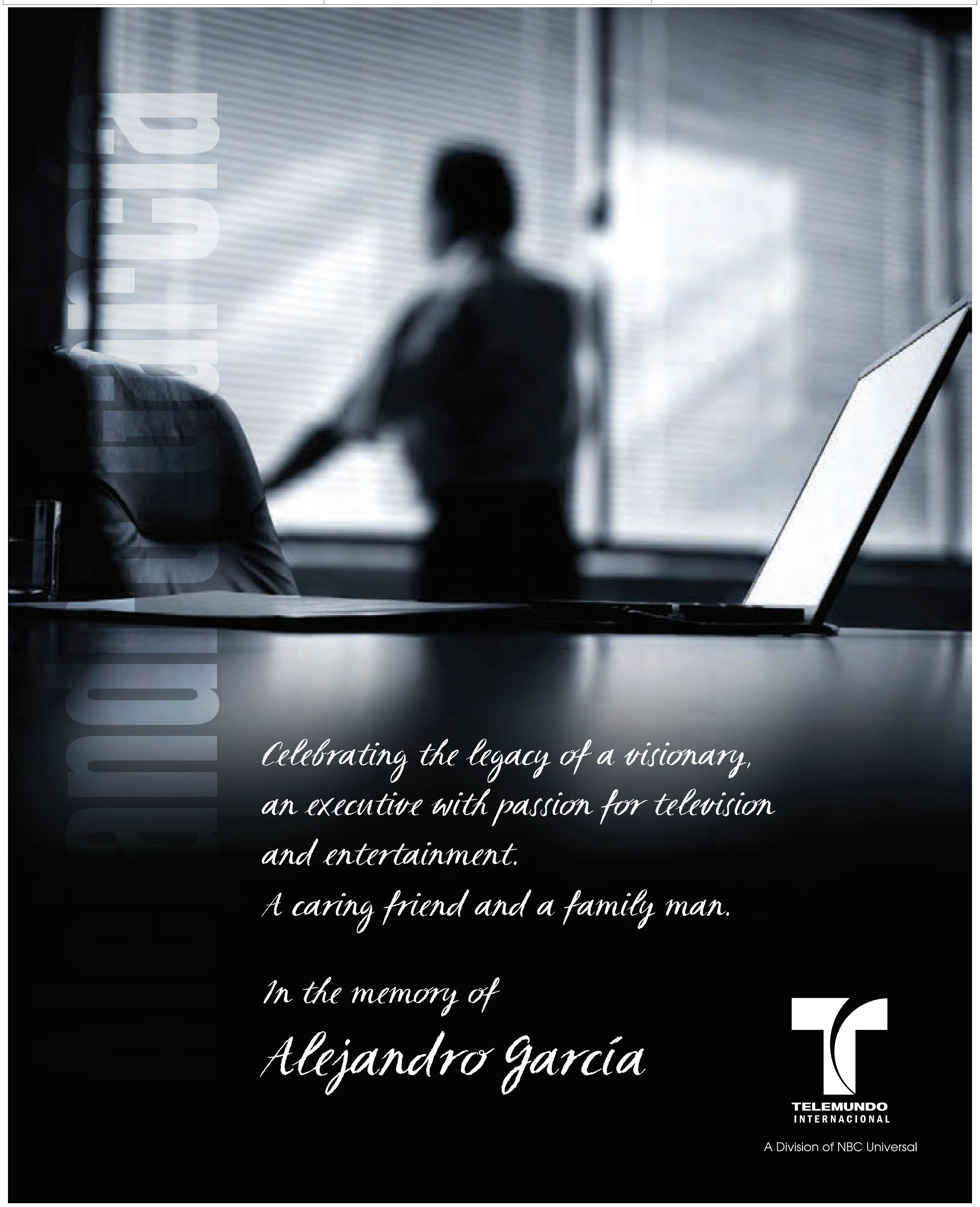
Pictured above are Globo's Jorge Nobrega, l., and Roberto Irineu Marinho just before his presentation. Visible in the middle is Brasil TV Forum's Ruben Glasberg.

Earlier in June, also in São Paolo, the 11th annual Brasil TV Forum was held, which moved from the Transamerica Expo Center to its traditional Frei Caneca Convention Center.

For the third year in a row, the Forum's main attraction was the Portuguese-language TV stations meeting, which involved broadcasters from all of the world's eight Portuguese-speaking countries.

This year's event marked the switch from an international event to a basically domestic (i.e., Brazilian) TV trade show with *VideoAge* as the sole international publication actively participating (pictured below).





Century Plaza Saved By Half

Developer Michael Rosenfeld has decided not to demolish his Century Plaza hotel in Los Angeles, after all. Instead, he now plans to build two 46-story skyscrapers next to the space age landmark. The proposal will cost $1.5 billion, and it will lead to the construction of hundreds of condominiums and offices behind the hotel located on Avenue of Stars. The Century Plaza hotel is a favorite venue for Latin American TV executives during the L.A. Screenings.

If the plan is approved, construction should be completed by 2014, and will involve renovating almost half of the guest rooms in the hotel and turning them into luxury condos. The number of guest rooms in the hotel would be reduced from 726 to 394 to make room for 63 condos. The hotel's lobby would also be remodeled and serve as the connector between the two high-rises plus the shops and plazas that will be added.

If city officials approve the plan, it will be one of the largest developments in Westside L.A. in decades.

While residents in the Century City area may oppose the plan based on congestion and the inconveniences caused by construction, the decision to keep the hotel standing is a significant victory for Los Angeles preservationists. Rosenfeld had run into opposition when the demolition plan was originally announced, but he now has preservationists' support, along with a tentative blessing from Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa.

Preservationists argue that the Century Plaza, which was constructed in 1966,

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is an important site, and Los Angeles Conservancy president Linda Dishman maintains that the hotel is significant both architecturally and culturally. The building was designed by Minoru Yamasaki, the same architect who envisioned the World Trade Center.

Rosenfeld purchased the Century Plaza for $366.5 million in 2008, and subsequently announced his plans to demolish the hotel and construct two 50-story hotel, office and condo towers in its place, causing the Los Angeles Conservancy and actress Diane Keaton, among others, to take action to save the hotel. After Los Angeles mayor and City Councilman Paul Koretz told Rosenfeld that the demolition was out of the question, Rosenfeld began work on his new plan.

U.S. Regulators Refuse To Regulate

After Wall Street financiers and U.S. regulators permitted the creation of two controversial film exchanges, Congress has stepped in.

The exchanges: Media Derivatives (also known as Trend Exchange) and Cantor Exchange, would have provided speculators with the opportunity to bet on a film's performance at the box-office.

Congress, however, passed legislation banning the trade of futures contracts based on motion picture box-office receipts. It was included in the legislation of the Wall Street Reform package, which was signed into law on July 21.

The Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), the federal agency that regulates the derivatives and futures market, had approved the plans from Cantor Exchange (a subsidiary of Cantor Fitzgerald) and Media Derivatives, (a trading exchange launched by Veriana Networks) on June 28 and June 14, respectively.

As reported in a front cover story in *VideoAge*'s May 2010 Issue ("Speculators Kicked Out of Hollywood's Lots"), the contracts would have allowed traders to bet on the gross receipts a movie pulled during opening weekend.

Before the legislation was passed, Media Derivatives' chairman and CEO Robert S. Swagger threatened to either sue the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), which lobbied against the exchanges, or go abroad with the futures trading plans if Congress barred futures trading in the U.S.

Now that futures trading has been banned, Swagger is said to be in the process of talking with foreign partners about hosting trading for the futures. Conversely, Cantor Fitzgerald abandoned its plans for the Cantor Exchange.

Hunt Hunts U.K. Film Council

After blasting the BBC for overspending, the secretary of the Department for Culture, Media and Sports in the U.K., Jeremy Hunt, announced that the U.K. Film Council will be eliminated. Each year, the Council provided funds to British-based independent productions. It also provided logistical support to Hollywood studios when they filmed in the U.K.

The British government gave the equivalent of U.S.$38 million in taxpayer funds to the Council every year, which also received funds from the National Lottery, as well as other sources. It has helped make films such as Robert Altman's Oscar-winning *Gosford Park*, Mike Leigh's Oscar-nominated *Happy-Go-Lucky* and James Marsh's Oscar-winning documentary *Man on Wire*.

The Film Council also has an office in Beverly Hills, California, and many Hollywood filmmakers are drawn to filming in Britain due to the country's 25 percent tax credit, experienced crews and studio facilities.

Culture Minister Hunt's announcement provoked opposition from director Clint Eastwood and *Frost/Nixon* producer Tim Bevan, chairman of the Council. In addition, over 50 actors, including Emily Blunt, James McAvoy, Bill Nighy and Ian Holm signed a letter that was submitted to the *Daily Telegraph* decrying the abolition of the Council and underscoring the impact the Film Council has had on their careers.

The announcement came about as a result of Prime Minister David Cameron's coalition government's program to reduce funding to various government agencies. In response to the public outcry, Culture Minister Hunt has stated that he believes the National Lottery funding will increase in order to fill the gaps after government spending is cut.

The department is reminding protesters that the initiative calls only for a stop to *government* spending on film, not a general stoppage on funding for film ventures in the U.K.

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Hulu To Share The Wealth

Hulu, a growing center for online movies and television viewing, plans to become accessible to the public in more ways than one. Company executives have reportedly been speaking to investment banks regarding a public offering that could bring to the company more than $2 billion. However, the U.S. market for initial public offerings (I.P.O.) is soft, so it is not clear how the Hulu proposal will fare if it is carried out.

Hulu was founded three years ago as a joint venture between News Corporation, Walt Disney Company, NBC Universal and private equity firm Providence Equity Partners. Thanks to former Amazon.com executive Jason Kilar, Hulu has transformed into one of the main sources of online video on the Internet. It carries content from a number of major studios, such as Lionsgate, MGM, Fox and NBC, but not CBS and the CW TV networks.

Currently, Hulu does not make a large profit, even though it has significant followers in the online video community. The company now wants to add a $9.99-a-month subscription service to generate revenue along with its advertising-supported business, which is not producing a large enough profit.

The pay plan is called Hulu Plus, and it will offer customers access to full seasons of TV shows, in addition to making movies available on devices such as Blu-ray players, iPads and iPhones. The company hopes that this offering will fortify it against Netflix and a possible update to Apple TV.

When Hulu was established, it was meant to challenge YouTube and other free video sites. Google purchased YouTube in 2006 for $1.65 billion, and while it is the online video leader in terms of viewers, it has remained unprofitable. Hulu's viewers dropped from 43.5 million in May to 24 million in June.

SPT's Hatamiya Gets EVP Post

Kim Hatamiya was appointed executive vice president of Marketing for Sony Pictures Television (SPT).

In her new post, Hatamiya will direct SPT's development and strategic implementation of advertising, marketing and promotion. She will also oversee media and client relations for network, syndication, cable and new media programming in the U.S., in addition to directing corporate brand marketing activities. Hatamiya's duties also include marketing for first-run and off-network syndication, daytime and primetime series, telefilms and family entertainment on both broadcast and cable networks. She will also manage SPT brands sold in the DVD marketplace.

Before the promotion, Hatamiya supervised marketing activities for SPT's international business lines. She also directed international networks and local language production.

Hatamiya is a Stanford University graduate. Prior to joining SPT in 2003 as senior VP of International Marketing, Hatamiya was senior VP and general manager of Television and Film for Mindrocket Media/JP Kids, an independent multi-platform children's and family media company. She also served as senior vice president of Marketing for Passport New Media in Los Angeles, where she directed the launch and branding of Your Own World, an Internet-based service for children. In addition, Hatamiya was an innovative SVP for Fox Kids Worldwide, where she helped launch Fox Kids U.K. and Fox Kids Latin America. Hatamiya's career path also brought her to Brian Grazer and Ron Howard's Imagine Entertainment and Home Box Office, where she served as VP of Film and Television Business Affairs and director of International Operations, respectively.

Famous quotes

"Critics and audiences agree this may be the worst year ever for [Hollywood] movies. How did things get this bad?"

Joe Queenan
The Globe and Mail, August 2, 2010

Book Review

Soccernomics Is More Than Just Football

Even though *Soccernomics* came out last year, it's still hot in view of the recent World Cup in South Africa, which thrust the sport into the global spotlight more than ever before. Perhaps because it came out in 2009, the book uses the antiquated term "soccer" to describe football, a word that this year's highly televised World Cup rendered universal.

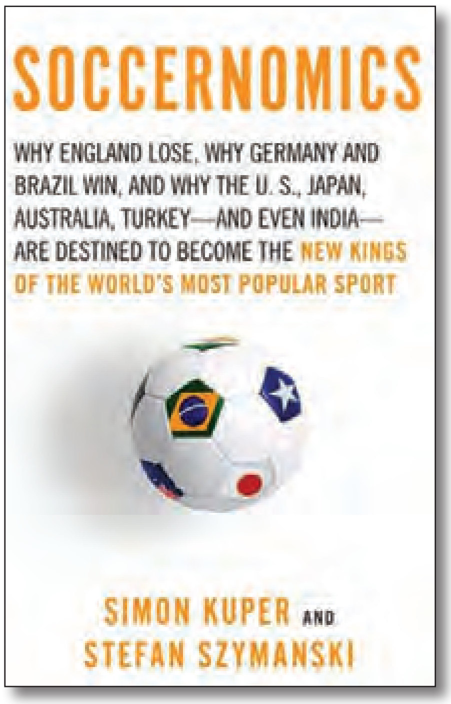
Penned by Stefan Szymanski (a "sports economist" from London's Case Business School) and Simon Kuper (a Paris-based sports columnist for the *Financial Times*), the volume, published by New York's Nation Books (328 pages, $14.95), is an interesting read. Which is not to say it's a particularly enjoyable one, due to the vast amount of mathematics and economic jargon, but it's interesting nonetheless.

The book addresses (albeit briefly) the aforementioned topic of lingo. The authors use the term "soccer" instead of "football," even though both writers are Europe-based (Kuper lives in Paris, while Szymanski lives in London). Their logic is that the term originated in England as a derivative of "Assoc," which was an early abbreviation for the sport's original name, "Association Football." "Soccer" was indeed the standard British term up until the 1970s, the book argues, and "football" was only taken up as a name when Americans started using the word "soccer." Soccer was then assumed to be an American construction to distinguish football from the gridiron variety of the U.S. sport, which in reality doesn't use a ball or the players' feet.

Beginning with the assumption that its readers are both avid football fans and trained economists, the authors examine several trends in football, and question a variety of nonsensical assumptions and dogmas that have dominated the world's most popular game since its earliest days.

Kuper and Szymanski begin by examining the theory that the English national team always seems to under-perform. The book makes the point that — for a medium-sized country that for years pursued an economic policy of isolation from what is now the European Economic Community — the team has actually been over-performing.

The authors go on to explain several concepts, and it must be said that some



of their observations are right on the mark. For example, the book takes a look at how football clubs are often run by a number of very unqualified people who can neither appreciate nor understand innovation. Clubs are often pressured by fans to purchase big name players (even if those funds should be allocated to more urgent needs). Clubs' scouting techniques are outdated and mostly inefficient (most players tend to be selected because their blonde hair makes them stand out on the pitch). The authors also explore the notion that football clubs shouldn't complain that they aren't making much money. Although they are considered a big and glamorous business, such clubs don't make a 10th of the income of even the smallest and least prestigious Fortune 500 companies, but some clubs insist on spending like them.

A recurring point that the authors make is that if economists ran football clubs, their teams would be playing better, winning more often, making more money and even — using mathematic game theory — winning penalty shootouts.

For instance, the English Football Association did not start showing matches on television until the '80s because it assumed that TV would deter fans from going to the stadium, ignoring the large revenues that TV coverage would generate. However, only when Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB approached the English Premier League (the more recent incarnation of England's highest rank) with a deal to air matches on his satellite TV, did the real money start rolling in.

Television plays a big part in *Soccernomics*, although the topic could have been examined in more depth. TV was used as one of many tools to measure which country is the most football crazy (the prize went to Norway). It is also offered as one of the main reasons why football is rapidly colonizing the developing world (the secret lies in the wide reach of the BBC amongst commonwealth nations), and why the English Premier League is the most watched league in Europe.

Ironically, television has put the spotlight on a different sort of football fan. The authors insist that fans ought to be treated more like consumers than pseudo-religious followers. They have data to show that people will care more or less about a team depending on league ranking, with a few notable exceptions: No matter how low in the ranking England's Leeds seems to sink, they have an unfaltering home following. Television forked over millions to football clubs, especially in England, where that money was put towards building new, safe, modern and expensive stadiums. Nowadays, it's difficult to imagine a stereotypical plaid-clothed cockney football hooligan forking out over £2,000 per season for the worst seats in London's Emirates Stadium to see Arsenal (one of London's biggest teams) kick a ball around against the Blackburn Rovers. These sorts of fans have certainly been left behind, as they have been pushed towards the pubs to watch the game over a mug of beer. Today, another sort of fan shows up at the stadium — a fan who belongs to a much higher income bracket. However, this new type of fan is still marginalized in what most team owners believe does not represent their largest market share.

While football fans/consumers could go to the movies, restaurants, bars or nightclubs instead of seeing football matches, the book argues that they pick the stadium, for the most part, as an alternative to many other sorts of leisure venues. Unfortunately, as long as clubs continue to treat their fans like swarms of loyal acolytes who will sleepwalk to the stadium every Sunday, a vast segment of their market will go untapped.

This is where the book's main point comes in: Football clubs and federations, run mostly by former players, are fearful of innovation and promote ineffective and sometimes nonsensical practices. For example, the book posits that racism is rampant in football. It took a very long time for black players to be widely considered viable, and it'll take even longer for black managers to obtain top jobs in the sector (the only notable exception being Ruud Gulit).

The bulk of the book's claims are backed up by a variety of charts and figures, as well as the assertion that calculating digression on an Excel spreadsheet is the most powerful tool devised by economists. The sources, however, are a bit lacking. Although all properly cited and catalogued, the sources' legitimacy is left almost entirely unaddressed. For the most part, this isn't a big problem, as the many statistics are drawn from professional consulting firms, like the U.K.-based Sport+Market. However, some readers might not know it's a reputable firm. The authors do not address this issue, presumably because other sources they cite are questionable. For example, the book extensively treats a Dutch Webmaster — identified only as "Paul in 't Hout" — as an infallible source for stadium attendance figures spanning four decades, without raising a single question as to how the numbers were obtained. The authors simply acknowledge that, "[Paul in 't Hout] has only one source in Cyprus."

Despite its shortcomings, the book does one thing very well: It talks about football as a sport for smart people. And although the authors gloss over many things that don't have to do with England (Spain, Germany and Brazil are only briefly mentioned), and practically ignore other important elements of the game (e.g., hooliganism), they do demonstrate a sort of intellectual frustration with the sport. Frustration is common amongst football fans who know not to take things at face value, and understand that the "beautiful game" (as it is called) might not be as beautiful as many of the fans would like to believe. Frustration abounds because teams sometimes play an aesthetically displeasing (or "ugly") brand of football just to win matches, and present tactics emphasize ball distribution, which is boring compared to individual possession.

Understandably, England is the world's most popular league, currently top-ranked by the European Football Federation. But for most of the years from which the book's data is drawn, the Italian, Spanish and occasionally German leagues were ranked higher than England. However, these rankings are hardly touched on at all. Perhaps, for English-speaking researchers, English figures are conveniently organized and catalogued. But such a narrow scope can hardly be enough for a book posing as an economic study. Sociologically, the book spans many countries and continents. But when dealing with football's economic history, it is narrow and shallow. **YS**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Social Media Is Everything But Social

Reaching program and service buyers outside a trade show environment is becoming increasingly difficult in today's marketplace. Simply posting a marketing letter is no longer effective or practical — especially considering the increased number of buyers' windows and divisions to deal with.

During pre-market preparations and post-market follow-ups, e-mail remains the most common method of communication, along with daily online newsletters like *VideoAge*'s e-Beat or *C21*'s Newsfeed. However, they must compete with other messages in a very crowded inbox.

Another practice that works, especially during pre-market days, is to have the new program lineup on sale listed on publications' Websites. This practice is more effective than using one's own Website, since buyers find it more convenient to review multiple shows at once and seek more information on individual sites. Finally, there is the traditional banner, a promotional visual placed on various Websites that is useful in creating awareness.

On the surface, it seems that today the best way to reach a vast number of potential buyers is via the cornucopia of marketing tools the Internet has to offer. This doesn't mean, however, that they are effective tools or that buyers are actually being contacted. In addition, all online services are not effective at trade shows, because buyers and sellers only have time to check the most urgent e-mail messages.

Another problem is that online marketing options have multiplied exponentially over the years and no one can empirically measure the actual effectiveness of each tool. For this reason, marketers are virtually forced to embrace all of them. In order to have some sort of strategy, one still has to be at least familiar with the types of online options, their jargon, and the basics of how they function.

For example, would it be appropriate to use "Social Media" or "Industrial Media?" In addition, should one use the Internet to "Communicate" or to "Inform?" Plus, how does "Collaborative Media" compare to a typical company Website? And, just to make things more complicated, one must also consider "Prosumer" versus traditional marketing multimedia.

Multimedia Explained ...

"This is Dr. Frank Foster, bringing you today's temperature, Joan Jackson with the humidity, Fred Williams with the barometric pressure and Sid Callison with the windchill."

Now, in order to make some sense out of all this jargon, let's simply say that:

*Social Media are your common **Blog**.

*Industrial Media are mainstream, credible sources, like newspapers, magazines and network TV news.

*Communicating is using Facebook.

*Informing means utilizing an authoritative source (i.e., *VideoAge*)

*Collaborative Media are sometimes referred to as citizen journalism, and are your typical **Wikimedia**.

*Prosumer is acting as a producer and a consumer at the same time (e.g., the Frito-Lay project), and

*Multimedia are various types of media that use a combination of different content forms such as YouTube.

Going into detail, we can say that **Industrial Media** present information that is verified, edited and creditable. This is something that PR people are good at.

Blog is a combination of the words "Web" and "log." A blog is a Website where a company publishes its news and information. Entries are commonly displayed in chronological order, and are usually organized by date, topic and tags. Companies have blogs in an area within their sites, (e.g., *VideoAge*'s Water Cooler) or on free outside online services.

The term **Blogosphere** refers to the large network of people and companies who have blogs. Reportedly, more than 184 million people worldwide have started blogs, and 77 percent of active Internet users read blogs. Some popular blogs include TMZ.com Celebrity Gossip (tmz.com), CNN Political Ticker (http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com) and Deadspin (www.deadspin.com).

A **Microblog** is a blogging format that allows users to send or post a small amount of text or multimedia updates to both open and restricted audiences. This includes sites such as Twitter and Tumblr. These posts are smaller than those found on regular blogs, and microblog entries can be easily updated by e-mail, text messages, and instant messages, or by posting on the Website. "Status updates" on social networking sites like Facebook is one example of a microblog within a larger social networking site.

The term **Social Media** also includes some Web 2.0 tools. It encompasses online technologies and practices that people use to share content, opinions and media. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and MySpace. Reportedly, Social Media account for 11 percent of overall Web traffic.

Since the online community seems to have lots of free time on its hands, it also invented the term **Web 2.0** to indicate the current stage of the Web, which focuses on interactive user participation and user-generated content. Commonly used sites like Facebook and YouTube are Web 2.0 tools. Not all websites are Web 2.0, but all the popular ones are (this is because Web 2.0 is a Java program).

Wikis are Websites that fall under the Wikimedia umbrella. Since they encourage user participation, they are considered collaborative media. As a result, users are asked to post, update and revise content, making them a quick (indeed, "wiki" comes from a Hawaiian word for "quick"), though questionable, reference.

Multimedia refers to user-created videos, pictures or music. Multimedia can appear on social media websites like YouTube, Facebook, Photobucket and Share The Music.

Most collaborative media are usually referred to as **User-Generated Content (UGC)**. This type of media content is created by end users rather than companies. A great example of UGC is the content posted on Wikipedia. In a B2B context, UGC could include photos or videos of companies' in-booth presentations taken and posted by attendees, or blog posts recommending or discussing the new products a company launched at the market.

Crowdsourcing is leveraging the power of many to accomplish something that was once done by a few. Crowdsourcing is when a company can take advantage of a large group of volunteers to complete a task for free, instead of using a smaller number of paid employees. In effect, it is harnessing the collective collaborative efforts of users. Tasks can be distributed through the Web to a large group of volunteers who work on a project as individuals and on teams. This is essentially the idea behind user-generated content, as users, rather than company employees, produce the content. Crowdsourcing can be used to affect trade show components like seminars and panel-discussion topics.

Prosumer is an end-user who is involved in the design of the product. Sometimes reaching out to Prosumers is called crowdsourcing.

Podcasts are digital media files that are usually sent through syndication feeds (such as Really Simple Syndication or RSS, that are anything but "simple"), and users can consume them on their computers, iPods and other media players.

When content is reposted on various Internet tools, it's called **Viral Marketing.** Viral marketing represents promotional content that is sent by users after they receive it via e-mail, blogs, or social-networking sites. Something has "gone viral" if it is consumed by a larger audience than it was originally broadcast to. Video-sharing through social networks is a great promotional tool, especially when content is reposted across a multitude of Websites and social network platforms. ●


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Fewer Buyers Did Not Disappoint Sellers

It started slow, but in the end, the market didn't fare badly, at least for some of the Italian, French and German companies exhibiting at the 17th annual DISCOP, which took place in Budapest, Hungary. It began with rain on June 22 and ended with rain on June 25. Curiously, it started with a conference and also ended with a conference. Held at its traditional venue, the Sofitel Hotel, DISCOP is the premiere market for Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries.

Between those dates, DISCOP recorded sunny days with a crescendo of buyers: slow on arriving at the start of the actual market on Tuesday, June 23, buyers gradually started to fill the corridors on day two, only to once again retreat on day three.

Perhaps because of the economic recession, there were fewer buyers compared to last year, a fact that was evident from opening day. Another reason for the reduced number of buyers is that the World Cup kept television network executives whose broadcasting organizations carried the football matches from attending.

As usual, there were many no-shows, an unfortunate characteristic of many CEE TV buyers. Traditionally at DISCOP, no-shows can amount to 30 percent, primarily as a cultural factor, as Eastern European program buyers are not yet in tune with Western business practices.


Televisa's Silvia Garcia, Pedro Font

However, considering the poor state of the economy in Eastern European countries (and in particular Hungary) the showing of buyers at DISCOP can be considered satisfactory.

One of the Italian exhibitors, Cinecittá Luce, even went so far as to thank the director of the Italian Institute for Foreign Trade in Hungary, Alessio Ponz de Leon Pisani, for the effective marketing strategy used to attract buyers to the Italian pavilion.

If the corridors on the hotel's four floors were slow at first, the basement areas, with an increased number of low-cost (compared to rented suites) "Viewing Boxes," "Tables" and "Media Tables," were always busy. This year, all available floor space, from the ground level up, was rented out to distributors, to the point that it was difficult to even find a seat for occasional meetings or simply to rest. All in all, the market area occupied a record seven floors, including the mezzanine, while the seminars and other activities were held at the nearby Gerbeaud House conference room.

Opening day started with three seminars, two spotlights (France and Hungary) and a pitching session. Closing day featured a Round Table to discuss *VideoAge*'s June Issue cover story, "The 3Bs: Blueprint, Broadcast, Broadband," which centered on the rules and regulations necessary to migrate from broadcast to broadband. Participating with *VideoAge*'s editor Dom Serafini were experts from the content, service and transport areas from Germany, France, Poland and Britain.


Zed's Dany Inthaxoum, TV France Int'l's Mathieu Bejot

Sellers numbered 304 companies from 36 countries, while there were 406 buyers from 31 countries, of which 265 companies represented TV stations and pay-TV platforms. There were also representatives from territorial agents, alternative new media platforms and home video distributors in attendance.

As usual at DISCOP, Latin America represented the largest and most active group of sellers from Brazil (Record TV), Argentina (Telefé), Colombia (Caracol) and Mexico (Televisa). Many Latin sellers, such as Latin Media, came from Miami, Florida.

Canada also made a strong showing, with eOne Entertainment, Breakthrough, Canamedia and others.

From Europe, the largest contingent came from France, under the umbrella of TV France International; followed by Italy, with ten companies under the umbrella of the Italian Trade Commission (ITC) and Germany, with Bavaria Media, Deutsche Welle and Studio 100. Among the ITC companies were RaiTrade, the sales arm of Italian state broadcaster RAI, and APT, the Association of Italian TV Producers.


Record TV's Delmar Andrade, Edson Mendes


ITC's director, Alessio Ponz de Leon Pisani, welcoming the Italian delegation

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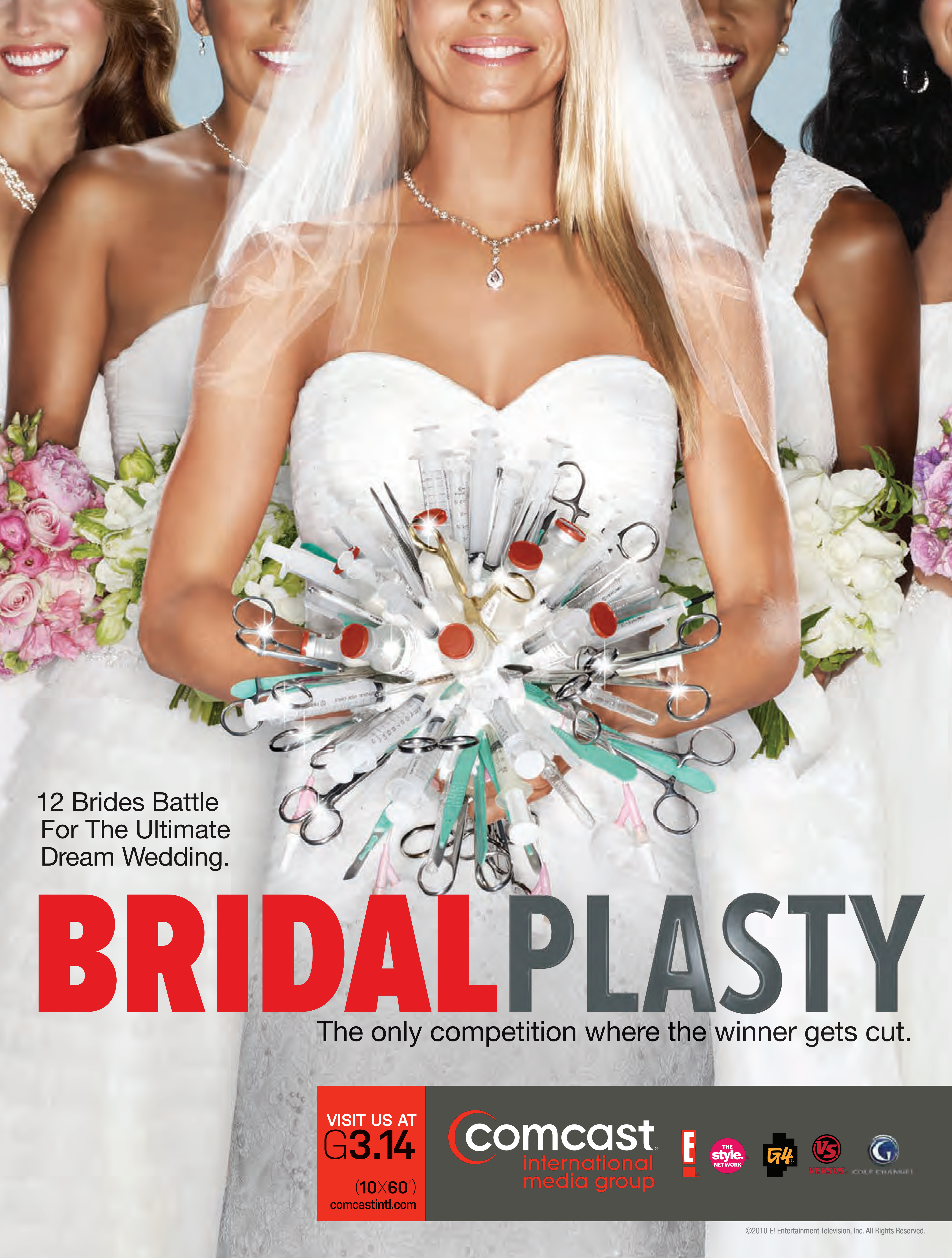

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(Continued from Page 16)

Outside the ITC umbrella were Mondo TV, Italy's largest producer of cartoons, and Mediaset, Italy's main private TV group.

Also active was TivúSat, Italy's satellite platform, which was in search of Hungarian and other CEE TV channels to import. Among the most active buyers were executives from Hungary, Russia and Slovakia.

On the recreational front, to be noted were the great (as usual) HBO night party on a boat on the river and the opening reception, sponsored by DISCOP's organizers. Some Hungarian TV buyers participated in the traditional dinner organized by ITC in honor of the Italian and Hungarian TV industries.

Bavaria Media's Helge Koehnen, Stefanie Fritz

Sellers reported great interest in Italian drama on the part of Hungarian buyers including enthusiasm for the two-part series *My House is Full of Mirrors*, starring Sophia Loren.

"And this," as one Italian DISCOP participant reported, "in spite of the financial crisis that Hungary is going through."

Sellers numbered 304 companies from 36 countries, while there were 406 buyers from 31 countries, of which 265 companies represented TV stations and pay-TV platforms.

DISCOP Roundtable Tackles Broadband Regulations

On the market's last day, DISCOP organized a breakfast roundtable to discuss *VideoAge*'s "The 3Bs: Blueprint, Broadcast, Broadband," which centered on the rules and regulations necessary for the industry to migrate from broadcast to broadband. Participating with *VideoAge*'s editor Dom Serafini were experts from the content, service and transport sectors from Germany, France, Poland and Britain.

Representing Telcos was Michael Henss, sales manager of Germany's Deutsche Telekom; from the content providers side there was Laurence Kaufmann, president of France's International Development Media; representing cable and satellite TV networks were Hanna Ciesielska and Paulina Hempowicz of Poland's Inea; from an Internet-based B2B company, Moritz Viehweger and Holger Hendel of Germany's Media Peers; from the U.K., *VideoAge* contributor and media analyst Bob Jenkins; and from the DISCOP organization, Elina Nesterova, head of business relations.

VideoAge's position, outlined in its June/July Issue, is that, in order for all involved to have equal opportunities and fair marketplaces, the various sectors need to be well regulated and well defined. At the roundtable discussion proved that, historically, all well-regulated sectors, offered great opportunities to a vast number of companies and less risk of failures.

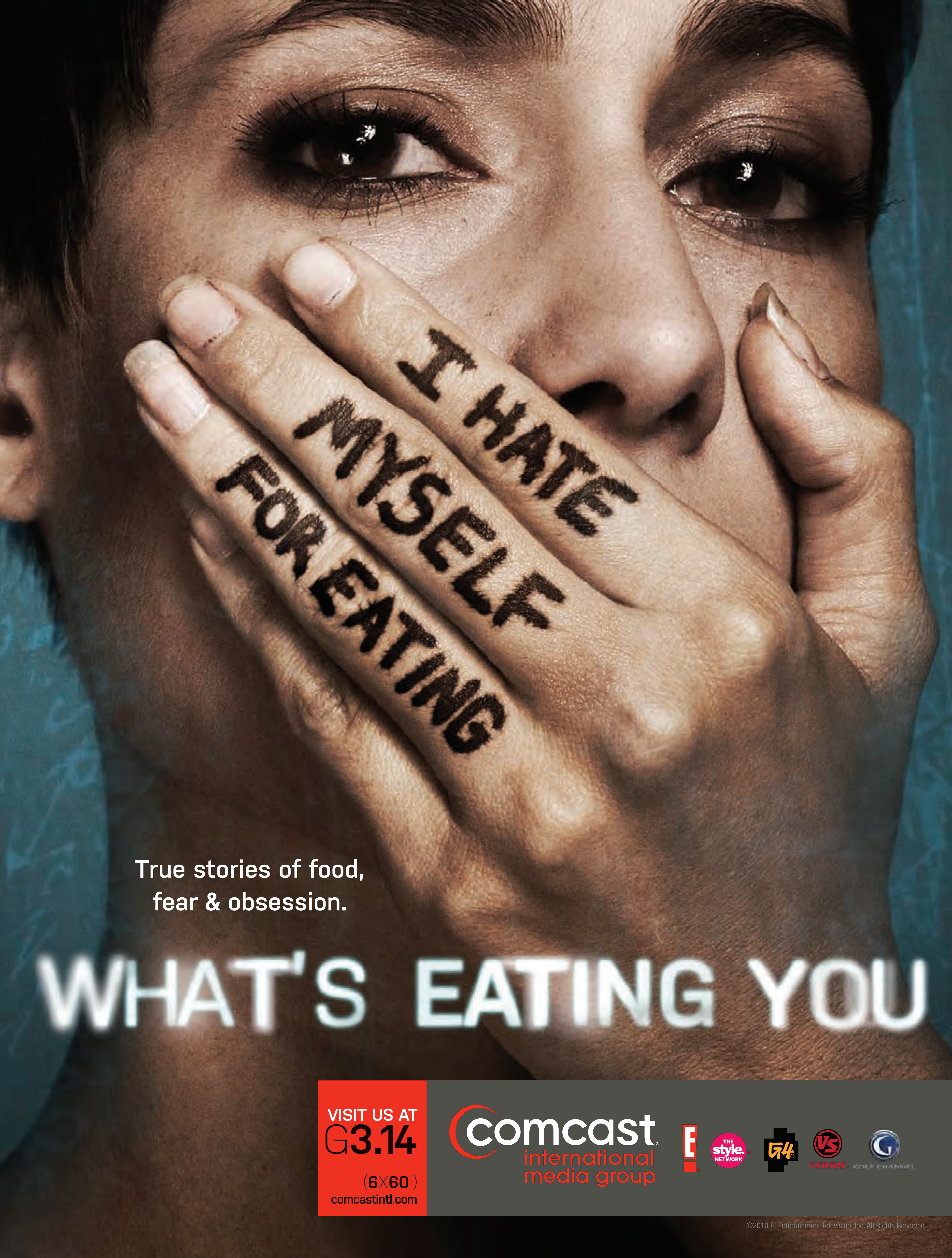
While a good number of roundtable participants agreed with *VideoAge*'s premise, some feared that a well regulated broadband provider sector would compete for clients only in areas of high population. It was then pointed out that rural areas could invite companies able to operate all forms of transport (Wi-Fi, cable-TV, Telcos, Satellite and power lines) and not be limited to only one form as it should be in densely-populated areas.

There was a lot of debate about the relative merits and demerits of vertical and horizontal integration as a model dictated by speculation rather than industrial imperatives. Broadband is a huge business and regulators the world over are struggling to come up with fair and far-sighted regulations, which are opposed by transport companies and their lobbyists.

The McLean, Virginia-based Alliance for Women in Media (AWM), for example, recently urged U.S. regulator, the FCC, "not to classify broadband Internet connectivity as telecommunications (i.e., common carrier) service." According to AWM, imposing the common carrier regulatory structure could reduce investment.

This is because the FCC has indicated that it is considering reclassifying broadband Internet, which would make it subject to some of the same nondiscriminatory rules as Telcos. Naturally, Telcos are against reclassification, while Web companies, including Skype, favor net neutrality rules, where all Web content is treated equally by the broadband service providers (the transport companies).

In an interview given to the *Wall Street Journal* by Glenn Britt, CEO of Time Warner Cable, Britt objected to having more regulations imposed on his company because, "nothing has happened that would cause a need for intrusive regulation."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Miami: Market's Not Fully Edged New Whine

We don't yet know if international TV companies' new favorite whine is, "I wanna go to NATPE" or simply, "I wanna go to Miami." In any case, NATPE announced that over 50 companies have committed to suite spaces, which represents a record number of early bookings.

This time the NATPE international TV market will be held in Miami Beach, Florida from Monday, January 24 through Wednesday, January 26, 2011 at the Fontainebleau Hotel.

As per NATPE's press release, all the U.S. studios will be participating, with the exception of Warner Bros., which has not yet made a commitment. As far as the *VideoAge* NATPE Daily, the market's key daily, is concerned, it will be distributed to all sleeping and exhibition rooms starting on Sunday, January 23 for the Latin American contingent, and continuing Monday and Tuesday. Reportedly, and for the first time, NATPE Daily will be delivered to all rooms, something that *VideoAge* has been doing since 1983. However, NATPE's own daily will be delivered from Monday through Wednesday, the last day of the market.

Representing Europe at NATPE 2011 will be BBC Worldwide, Mediaset, Fireworks, Sevenone and CDC. Other countries participating from outside the U.S. will include Israel and Canada. Latin America will, naturally, be fully represented, as it is every year.

NATPE has taken over 1,200 of Fontainebleau's 1,500 rooms: exhibition suites and sleeping rooms, plus 400 rooms at the adjacent Eden Roc Hotel.

Of the hotel's four towers, only the Tresor Tower will be used for hospitality suites and meeting rooms. At Tresor, which has a total of 37 floors, only floors eight to 18 and 26 to 35 will be used for exhibition, for a total of 21 floors. On some floors, NATPE will not be able to rent all the suites, as some of the hotel unit owners

Bender Media's Susan Bender

have not granted the hotel permission to rent them.

For overflow and/or private meetings, a number of U.S. studios and other distributors are also renting some of the 20 cabanas by the pool area. Cabanas are only available to companies that have signed up for a suite or a booth on the NATPE hall, which is located right across from registration and is where the magazine bins will be situated.

Each floor at the Tresor has 16 suites, which NATPE will rent, with prices ranging from $8,200 for the smaller ones to $21,500 for the larger ones. Each suite has a kitchenette. Prices cover four days (late afternoon Sunday to Wednesday) and are all-inclusive.

The only problem envisioned could be removing the beds (at an extra fee of $150). The hotel will not store them; therefore they will have to be kept in the bathrooms, which is not a problem for the largest suites (which have two bathrooms), but is inconvenient for the smaller ones.

According to Cecilia Rivera, director of marketing at Televisa Internacional, "Many people are excited about the new location, and there will be a lot of people attending. 2011 will be a 'test' for everybody in terms of organization, location, service and assistance."

Because of the sub-tropical Miami Beach location, it is expected that many participants will extend their stay to relax and enjoy the ocean, making NATPE no longer a two-day market, but a six day event, transforming it into a Sunday-to-Saturday excursion.

However, it remains to be seen if Miami gives NATPE an edge, if the resort area will make a difference and if the economic climate will be better than the subtropical Miami climate.

In the view of Patricio Teubal, head of sales at the Rome, Italy, office of Mediaset, "In the recent past NATPE has gradually attracted many more Latin American TV companies. Many of those production companies and broadcasters have offices and/or headquarters in Miami, which makes it more cost and time-effective for them to have a market in their city. Miami is also a city easily reached from most Latin American capitals, in terms of time and airfare. So Miami is a natural choice for any market that has a big percentage of Latin American executives. Having said this, we'll have to find out if the many attendees who actually live and work in Miami will make the market more or less-focused than the one in Las Vegas. We also are confident that the economic climate in Miami during NATPE will be from moderate to good; and as it will be held in January we will most likely avoid storms and hurricanes too."

Similarly, for Florida-based Monica

Ramon of Colombia's Caracol Internacional, "Miami is a good place to have NATPE. I had the opportunity to visit the [Fontainebleau] hotel and its suites, and the facilities look really nice. The only concern I have is whether it will be a focused market. When NATPE participants traveled to Las Vegas, they focused just on the market. But in Miami, many NATPE participants have family and friends in and around the city, so it is possible that the market will not be as focused as it was in Las Vegas."

New York-based Bender Media's Susan Bender anticipated "that it will be a very busy market from both the exhibitor and client perspective. Miami in January should attract many more European companies as well. From the Latin perspective, Miami is a second home and/or office, for many of our clients. So the ease of travel should be welcomed, as opposed to the long trek to Las Vegas. It should be a very well attended market, and we look forward to seeing all of our client base."

For California-based Gavin Reardon, who represents Canada's Incendo, "After the odor of stagnation NATPE acquired in its years in Las Vegas, I have high hopes for a fresh and vibrant market in Miami. There is a buzz around NATPE again. The Europeans, who've stayed away in droves over the last few years, will be returning and Miami is one of the main reasons for this. As the economic slump of the last few years wanes, the conditions feel right for good business."

For Emilia Nuccio of Echo Bridge, Miami will make a difference because it "is much more accessible to Latin Americans and Europeans alike via direct flights. Also, [people] will want a break from winter weather, and Miami offers great weather in January." As far as business is concerned, "companies are seizing the opportunity that, no matter the economic condition, people seem to want and need entertainment, plus there are newly planned channel launches everywhere."

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Roma Fiction Fest Review

The Business Part Of The Show Did Not Go Missing

This time, the organizers of the Roma Fiction Fest (RFF) — which ended toward the middle of last July — invited many international television "big wigs," paraded them in front of an attentive, admiring public, kept them well fed with dinners and happy with cocktails, and then sent them back home to recount the marvels of the Italian audiovisual industry.

On the other hand, how could television program buyers from over 35 countries not be in awe as they sipped fine prosecco during an evening cocktail under Castel Sant'Angelo? Not that the buffet was any less great, with food stations organized in such a way as to keep lines very short. In this case, the credit goes to the staff of RaiTrade and Mediaset, who co-organized the event as well as any Hollywood studio could (and they sure know how to throw a party!).

The cocktail was part of the "Business" component of the RFF, whose headquarters was at the Lumsa University auditorium, where Italian content distributors set up stalls to individually screen their new shows.

For these and other reasons, in little more than four years, the RFF has become the country's major showcase of Italian television. It is made up of an awards component (the "Festival") and a "Business" element, which is to say, the trade market.

"Doing business with USA" Panel

According to some estimates, there were over 100 buyers from 40 different countries active in the Business part of the RFF, while overall participation totalled 1,500. Add to these many producers, who only participated in the Festival, and whose press conferences took place in the Adriano multiplex. To be honest, this confused some participants, like Barry Jossen, head of Disney Studio's production, who was invited to make a presentation in front of, as he put it, "what looked like 250 students," and found himself wondering what the focus of the event might be.

Disney also stated that it neither sponsored nor organized the opening night, although its execs were the guests of honor. Disney limited itself to inviting a few people to the screenings of its *Body of Proof*, while the RFF took care of the rest of the invitees for the soiree.

In the nearby Lumsa Conference Center, apart from screenings stalls, activities such as pitching sessions, conferences on business in the U.S., U.K. and Asia and general presentations of new shows took place.

VideoAge didn't extensively cover the Festival portion of the event, preferring to focus on the Business side instead, seeing as it's the most needy section of the Italian television industry. This lagging Italian TV sector registers overall sales of drama series in foreign markets at only 20 million euro per year, which is basically the revenue of a mid-size American distributor.

APT's Chiara Sbarigia, RFF's Michele Misuraca

For this reason, the RFF is considered vitally important for Italy, something that the new governor of the Italian Lazio Region (where Rome is located), Renata Polverini, underlined, assuring that, "It will go on and the region will refinance it," greatly lifting the burden of the Rossellini foundation, which organizes the event.

One of the RFF conferences titled, "The crisis of the market: Ideas to solve the problem," could have been titled, "Fiction on Italian television is a real drama." It was held in the Adriano Multiplex with standing-room only, and several TV producers first outlined the issues they were facing, then formulated their demands in front of an audience that might very well have represented the entire Italian television industry.

The problems outlined during this conference in the Festival component were the usual: Network budget cuts, lack of work for many, editorial interference and the lack of rights for foreign sale.

As observed by the president of the Italian Television Producers Association (ATP in Italian), Fabiano Fabiani (who had promised to make it "short," and indeed he did!), the investments by RAI in the production of drama series fell from 284 million euro in 2008 to 200 million in 2009. For Mediaset, the situation is worse: 105 million in cuts, from 250 million euro in 2008 to 145 million last year. Sky Italia has produced only four dramas in the last

(Continued on Page 24)

RaiTrade's Sesto Cifola, New Co. RAI Int'l's Maya Costantini, actor Ralph Palka, New Co. Int'l Giovanni Celsi

Mediaset Distribution's Patricio Teubal, TV Azteca's Marcel Vinay Hill

Barry Jossen, EVP, Studio Creative and Prouction of Disney's ABC Entertainment


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Roma Fiction [Continued]

(Continued from Page 22)

three years, while La7 investments in drama are near zero.

To summarize the outcome of the conference, it's sufficient to examine the requests by the producers, which were the usual:

1) To be adequately financed by the TV networks
2) Increase the demand for drama series by broadcasters
3) No creative interference by network executives
4) Holding onto international rights


"Doing business with Asia" Panel

The crisis that the Italian entertainment sector is going through has created some serious problems, considering that the Italian television industry is totally unprepared to face it. In the past, Italian producers have been coddled both by broadcasters and by state subsidies. Now that these crutches have been necessarily removed, the industry is limping, disoriented and without ideas.

In fact, the second part of the conference titled, "Ideas to solve the problem," was brushed over superficially and esoterically. This in spite of a number of examples — just look at Canada, Great Britain and the United States, where there are no subsidies and producers receive only 40 percent from networks that commission content, as noted by one of the participants in the conference, Diego Suarez, a FOX executive.

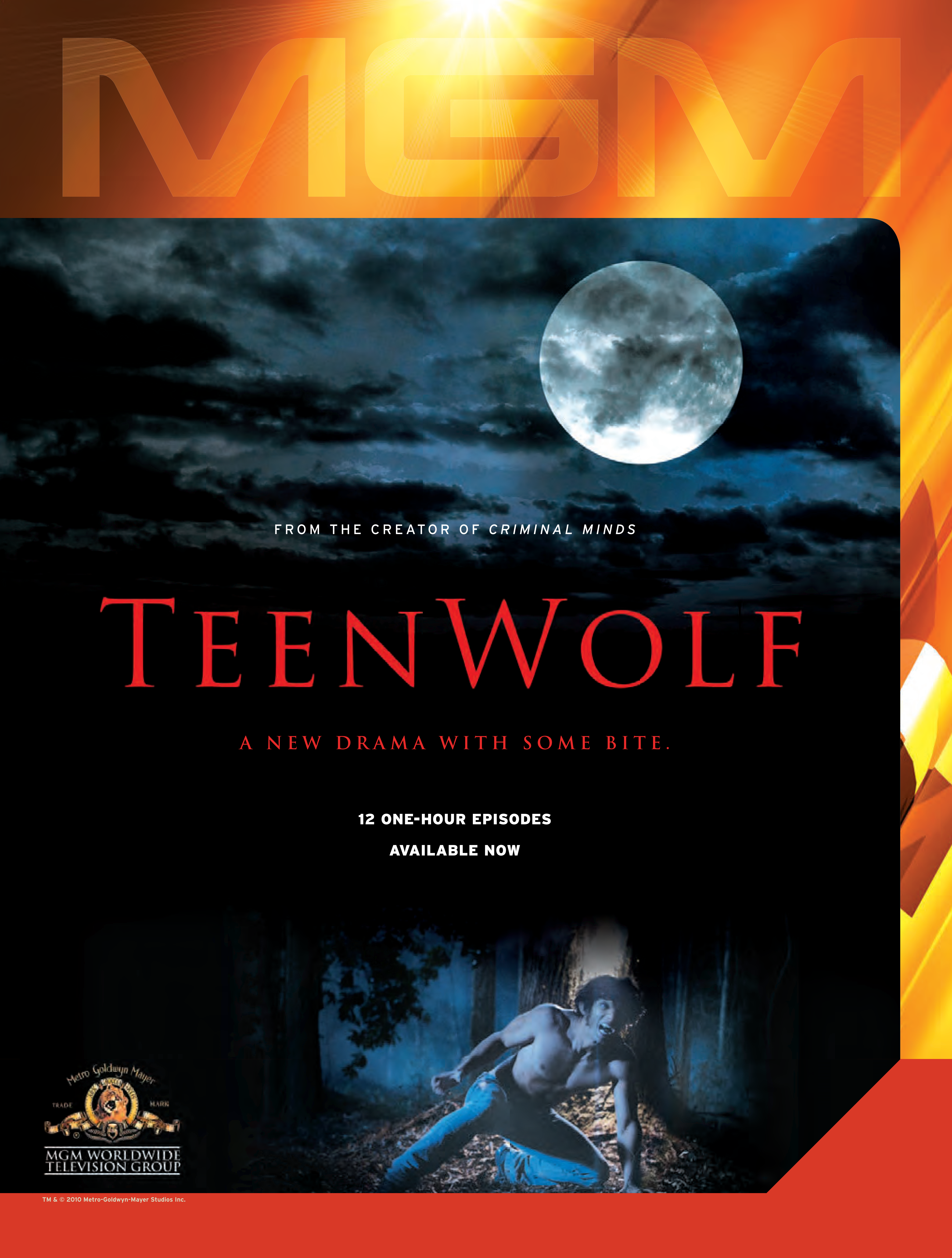
These, however, are solutions that require experience in marketing and sales and pre-sales in foreign markets, all talents that Italians in the fashion, wine, food and shipyard businesses know well, but that those in the entertainment sector do not.

A typical case in point was noted recently at DISCOP, the Central and Eastern European television trade market held in Budapest, where a representative of the Italian pavilion was able to obtain product literature from just two Italian companies. Obviously, the other producers and distributors weren't too interested in selling their content, presumably because they were "content" with what the state and domestic broadcasters provided.

Another significant fact is that the vast majority of the participants at the RFF's "Crisis" conference were not present at other parts of the Business section of the Roma event, held in the nearby conference hall of Lumsa University, where international producers and broadcasters discussed topics such as "How to do business with the U.S., the U.K. and Asia."

At the RFF conference, producer Claudia Mori discussed two additional problems in the Adriano Multiplex. She detailed the strained relationship between broadcaster and producer, as well as the increased cost of production.

Other participants included French producer Nicolas Traube, who outlined France's similar problems; Federico Scardamaglia, who explained how product placement, if it were allowed by networks, could provide a needed additional financial resource; and the researcher Flavia Barca, whose long presentation was devoid of any practical use. The panel was moderated by a journalist from Italian financial daily *Il Sole 24 Ore*, Marco Mele, who resisted the temptation to make any comments, which was a real shame because he could have asked why telenovela producers in Latin America can not only produce series at 80 percent less cost than in Italy, but also export their products throughout the whole world, something that Italy just can't do.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Market Rides The Recovery Wave

For many companies in the TV business, 2010 has been a year of marked recovery from 2009's economic downturn. Ad revenues have begun to rebound, program sales have increased and market attendance has returned to normal. After a successful MIP-TV and a fruitful L.A. Screenings, this Fall's MIPCOM promises to be the next step towards the restoration of industry equilibrium.

Now in its 26th year, MIPCOM 2010 will take place October 4-8 in its traditional venue, the Palais des Festivals in Cannes, France. As usual, the main event will be preceded by MipJunior, the specialized children's programming interlude. Last year, organizers reported 12,000 people in attendance, of whom 4,000 were buyers. This was a modest increase from MIP-TV earlier in the year, which logged 11,500 attendees and 3,500 buyers. This year, organizers and participants alike are hoping for an even better showing.

Laurine Garaude, director of organizing company Reed Midem's Television Division, projected an "increase in numbers with over 12,000 participants from some 100 countries," adding that, "We are also expecting some 1,700 exhibiting companies and over 4,000 buyers."

Certainly, the pervasive sense of optimism is reflected in the market's theme: "Redefining the Entertainment Experience," which, according to Garaude, aims to "present the future-defining people, trends and content that will shape this business in the years to come." Nowhere is the topic more prevalent than the conference schedule, which is laden with panels, seminars and keynotes geared towards topics such as social media and creating TV in the Internet age.

While the studio presence was smaller than usual at last April's MIP-TV (some studios opted to exhibit in suites at the Palais, rather than the traditional booths), they will be out in full force, as they are at every MIPCOM, ensuring that the conference floor will be bustling with activity. As usual, the smaller independent distributors will also be there in droves, taking advantage of what is, for some, arguably the most important market of the year and the third most important for Latin American companies.

Opus Distribution's Ken Dubow

VideoAge caught up with a cross section of executives from around the world to get an idea of market plans and expectations, as well as what kind of programs will be selling like hot cakes in the halls of the Palais.

Marcel Vinay, Jr., CEO of Mexico-based TV Azteca/Comarex noted that he expected to see a bigger turnout than at MIP-TV. Vinay and company will be on hand with two new series, drama *When Night Falls* and action series *The Underground Conspiracy*. The latter show in particular is a departure for the company, which has, in the past, focused primarily on dramas and telenovelas. "One of the challenges of this market will be putting out an action series in the international market," said Vinay. He added that, in addition to promoting new shows, his team will be targeting buyers from Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Another Latin company, Argentina-based Telefilms, plans to hit the ground running to promote its substantial catalogue. President Tomas Darcyl had this to say about his firm's strategy for the market: "We will be presenting our new slate of big budget productions as well as our fantastic library." Among other products, Telefilms will be highlighting new projects including *Red Dawn,* a big MGM production with Larry Crowne starring Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts; *Source Code* with Jake Gyllenhaal and *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger*, the next Woody Allen film with Antonio Banderas, Naomi Watts and Anthony Hopkins.

A substantial delegation is expected from host-country France. A number of French distributors will once again exhibit under the banner of TV France International. Mathieu Bejot, the organization's executive director, remarked that, "We'll organize our usual pavilion in the Palais, which should include 55 to 60 member companies."

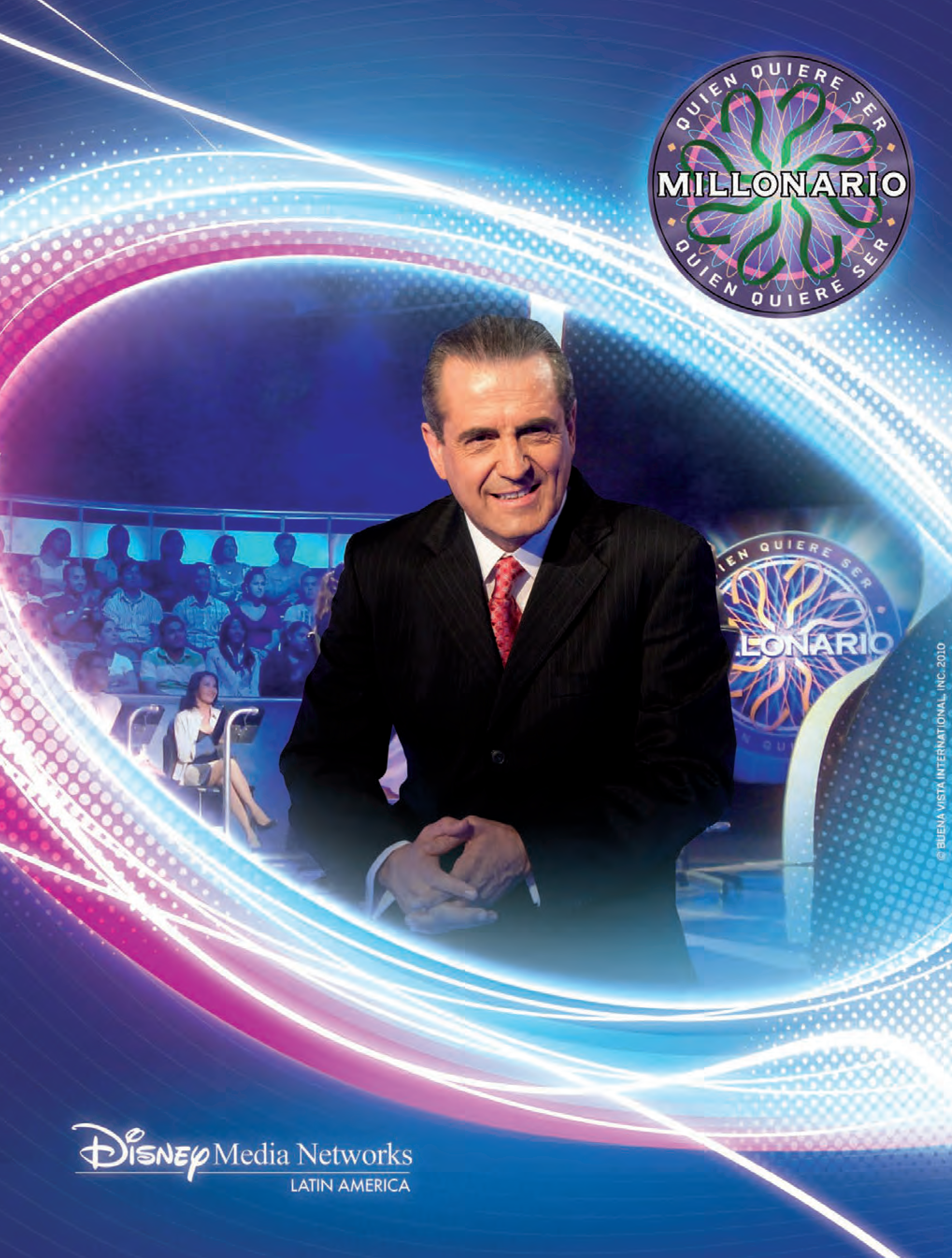
For Patrick Elmendorff of Germany-based Studio 100 Media, this year's market will be all about sales, networking and potential co-production and co-financing partners. "We'll focus on offering the new modernized and revived classics *Maya the Bee*, *Vicky the Viking, Heidi* and the charming adventures of *Florrie's Dragons*, as well as our brand new production *Woodlies*," Elmendorff said. Where attendance is concerned, Elmendorff was confident that the market will be a productive market for his company. "MIPCOM 2009 proved to be very satisfactory, as our fully booked schedule proved," he said, adding, "In our experience the market usually attracts big crowds, so this year we expect it to be well attended."

Nadav Palti, CEO and president of Israel-based Dori Media Group, was also optimistic about attendance. "As we noticed in recent markets, there is a slow recovery in almost all territories after the worldwide financial crisis," he observed. Palti went on to say that in the current economic climate, telenovelas are in great demand, as they build high viewer loyalty. In addition to its usual slate of novelas, the firm is showcasing action series *Ladronas*, comedy *Date Blind*, and teen vampire soap *Split II*, among other properties. As for targeted sales regions, Palti simply stated, "One of Dori Media Group's big advantages is that we produce for one single territory — the world."

Los Angeles-based Rive Gauche president Jon Kramer likewise emphasized a global focus. "We find that since we have such an array of products, we have something for

(Continued on Page 28)


Telefilms' Tomas Darcyl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MIPCOM Preview [Continued]

(Continued from Page 26)

The Fremantle Corporation's Irv Holender

everyone," he said. However, Kramer and his team will also be targeting Britain in particular this year. "We hope to see some more action in the U.K., which has been a depressed market since the economic downturn," he remarked.

Singapore is expected to, as usual, have a significant market presence under umbrella organization Media Development Authority (MDA). Dr. Christopher Chia, the organization's CEO, remarked that MIPCOM gives the MDA firms the opportunity to seek out European and North American buyers, and as such, they will be bringing "a strong representation from Singapore companies in animation and 3D stereoscopic content." In keeping with MDA's 3D theme, the 10-company delegation will be highlighting such shows as *ZZZ-Force*, a new 3D Stereoscopic animation TV series that is 100 percent Singapore-made and Singapore-owned, as well as *Mr. Moon*, *Silly Bitty Bunny* and *Rob The Robot*.

While many executives see this year's market as a return to form for the entertainment industry, some aren't so sure. Ken Dubow, president of Tarzana, California-based Opus Distribution remarked, "Have we finally dug ourselves out of the recession? I don't know." Still, Dubow remains hopeful that buyer attendance will be stronger than it was at MIP-TV, despite the enduring challenge of the poor economy. With two TV movies complete and two more in production, Dubow is hoping to target Western Europe, although he noted, "We sell all over the world." At MIPCOM Dubow will be taking advantage of what is commonly called a "pod" stand, which is the least expensive exhibition option.

When it comes to market trends, the executives interviewed had a range of predictions. Rive Gauche's Kramer pointed to "an explosion of female-oriented channels." In addition to its usual roster of clip and reality shows, Rive Gauche is tackling the fad with a slate of series directed at women, including *True Crime With Aphrodite Jones*.

Meanwhile, Irv Holender, director of Toronto-based The Fremantle Corporation, said he expected to see a growing need for scripted programming. "We're finding the need and the want for international networks to be involved in the initial development of the series," he said, adding, "People are looking for shows that have no borders." With this trend in mind, Holender is bringing a roster of scripted series to Cannes, including classic properties *Zoro* and *Black Beauty*, the latter of which will be revamped for today's tweens.

Patrick Roberts of U.K.-based DRG predicted that, in addition to fiction, factual programming will continue to be popular. "Demand and investment continue to grow for proven and trusted unscripted and drama formats," he said. Thus, DRG will be busy promoting a multi-genre roster, topped by *Heston's Mission Impossible*, drama *Lip Service* and documentary *The Miracle Baby of Haiti*, among other dramas and formats. Roberts also noted that having a varied lineup of titles will be of the essence this year, since, as he put it, "Some buyers are now only attending one market a year, which makes it even more vital for us to present a strong, attention-grabbing slate."

Fireworks International's Saralo MacGregor

Studio 100 Media's Patrick Elmendorff

U.S.-based executive Saralo MacGregor, EVP of Worldwide Distribution for U.K.'s Fireworks International also highlighted high quality drama and factual programming as safe bets to sell well. She added, "Due to the global economic situation, there has been a marked effect on buying habits, which I believe will see broadcasters continuing to carefully consider proven shows that offer elements such as a strong ratings history, well-known talent or established co-production partners." MacGregor seems to be taking her own advice, bringing star-studded thriller *Thorne* to market, in addition to HD non-scripted series *Freak Encounters* and a number of other shows.

Programming trends aside, the conference aspect of this year's convention offers a packed schedule of activities, both new and traditional. In addition to the over-arching theme, MIPCOM 2010 will direct the focus down under, with its Spotlight on Australia program. The agenda of Aussie-centric events includes keynotes from Fremantle and Shine execs about their experiences working on the continent, as well as seminars about the country's broadband future and meet-and-greets with key industry players who call the Outback home.

Australia won't be the only region grabbing attention. Attendees can drop in to the first ever Asian Content Exchange, taking place on October 6, for a taste of the latest market developments in China, Japan and Korea. The inaugural edition of the forum boasts screenings, networking opportunities, and some insight into the biz in the Far East.

When it comes to speakers, the lineup this year is top-notch. Jon Feltheimer, the co-chairman and CEO of Lionsgate, will be delivering the Media Mastermind keynote on October 5. Feltheimer will also be the honoree at the traditional MIPCOM gala dinner, where he will be recognized for his prodigious work on a variety of award-winning series. Facebook VP Joanna Shields will also take the mike on October 5, sharing the future business model of the social networking juggernaut. Also on the roster are Scott Moore, executive producer and GM of MSN, and Geoff Sutton, GM of MSN International Media, both of whom will speak on the morning of October 6.

As usual, there will also be a slew of parties, cocktails, press conferences and appearances by celebrities like Robert Redford. The traditional opening night cocktail party will take place on Monday evening at the Martinez Hotel, and be preceded by a world premiere screening of Lionsgate's high-gloss advertising series *Mad Men*, as well as new sitcom *Running Wilde*. Also on Day One is Disney's MIPCOM Media Luncheon, and other luncheons include Day Two's Australia Lunch dedicated to the event's theme country, Day Three's VIP Speaker and Connected TV Lunch and Day Four's Meet the Speakers Networking Lunch. Additionally, the evening of Day Two is dedicated to the Producer's Cocktail, which will be in competition for party-goers with the fête put on by Zodiak and RDF to celebrate their merger. And all this in addition to the other countless yacht parties and nocturnal bashes hosted by companies from around the world. **ES**

Dori Media's Nadav Palti


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Ships Used As Convention Venues Can Be Refreshing

MSC's Rick Sasso

Organizers of small conferences and screenings often entertain the question of where to hold their next meeting. The first requirement of such gatherings is that the host place be a small enough town that it is not too dispersive and won't lose participants to other attractions (such as museums or sightseeing). The second, equally important requirement, is that the place be a resort or a landmark location. Third, it cannot be too far away from an airport and it has to have good hotel accommodations. Fourth, for a gathering of some 200 people — comprised of 150 buyers and 50 support personnel and other invitees — in the case of a dedicated screenings event, total costs have to be within the $400,000 range for a three-night gathering. But the most important requirement of all is that the place be exciting and, if possible, unique.

Then, if all of the above are necessary, why has no one thus far opted for a cruise ship?

Imagine starting from a port with a great airport facility and sailing every night to a different town for some extra amusement, while having a captive audience during the day. In addition, all the necessary entertainment can be found onboard and the organizers will have the great advantage of being able to generate a refreshing optimism from the invited guests.

One of the possible problems with a ship as a "floating" convention site could be the "dropping out" (missing the call) of a few guests during the port stay. In that case, arrangements would have to be made to bus those who missed the boat to the next port.

A second drawback is that an estimated 33 percent of people are susceptible to motion sickness, including sea sickness. This, however, can often be prevented with some over-the-counter medicine like Dramamine.

For this report, *VideoAge* got in touch with Lyan Sierra-Caro, an executive with the Miami, Florida-based Royal Caribbean International (RCI), to find out if Royal ever housed a convention or conference that has to do with television. Her response was: "I am not aware of all of the groups that have been onboard our ships. We have 21 ships in service that sail year-round throughout the world, so it is possible we have had a group of this type onboard."

VideoAge also contacted Rick Sasso, president and CEO of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida-based Mediterranean Shipping Co. (MSC), to ask several questions regarding a TV conference that could be held on a ship.

In general terms, passenger ships are divided into cruise liners and ocean liners (for line voyages). Right now the only dedicated transatlantic ocean liner is the "Queen Mary 2." Ship capacity varies from 1,800 people to 5,400, and of these, 32 percent to 38 percent represent the crew.

Sasso reported that MSC ships hold up to 3,300 guests. Market and seminar organizations can have groups as small as 50 people. Per Sierra-Caro, RCI ships range from carrying 2,300 to 6,400 guests. Depending on the ship, a group can be as large (the full ship) or as small as possible.

VideoAge also asked Sasso if the ships can have conference visitors (when anchored) other than those people who will actually be sleeping on board. "No visitors are allowed on the ships even when they are anchored, only cruisers," he answered.

On the other hand, Sierra-Caro said that, "We do have the ability to have day visitors on the ship, but they need to have a business purpose in order to board."

Then, can a "convention ship" with people other than those sleeping onboard go to sea for several hours and go back to port? "We do not usually change the ship's itinerary unless the ship has been fully chartered by the group," answered Sierra-Caro. Does the cost change if the "convention ship" sails or if it is anchored? "Our ships are usually not docked for more than one day, so this would not be applicable," she stated. Similarly, Sasso said, "Ships always sail port to port every night all year."

Can a ship have space for exhibits (i.e., stands) or are rooms big enough as hospitality suites? "Yes," said Sierra-Caro, "depending on the size of the ship and group we can work with the group to determine the appropriate space onboard [for exhibits]. There is no cost for our conference space."

According to Sasso, "Most [MSC] ships don't have exhibit space per se and cabins are not generally big enough to set up as hospitality suites. Cabins' suites can be used for one-on-one meetings, but not much more than that. However, most of the lounges and showrooms are available to be used as meeting space during the cruise. Rooms can accommodate from 50 to 1,250 people. Some vessels also have dedicated meeting rooms as well, and lounges are set aside for the private meetings. The only restriction is that it is difficult to set any room aside for 24/7 use by the group. It would be for various times a day. This would prevent the set-up of booths in such spaces, as they would have to be taken down. But, there are some lounges that can be fully dedicated, and that would be on a case-by-case basis depending on the size of the group on that cruise. [If not on a chartered basis] there will be a few hundred or more other cruisers on the ship and the ship must offer them their expected amenities. In addition, the main theatres on our ships hold from 700 to 1,250 people (depending on the ship) and have full audiovisual services. It's a great place to conduct a seminar or screenings."

Does the manpower for setting up come from the ship, or can it be hired from the outside? "No, it has to be our manpower," said Sasso. Similarly, Sierra-Caro said that, "everything is done with [our] ship's resources."

What about furniture and video equipment rentals? "This depends," Sierra-Caro added. And for Sasso too: "It depends. We have lots of TVs throughout the ship and in every cabin. Closed circuit and satellite."

VideoAge then asked how a convention ship is priced. Sasso answered: "You can assume $200 per day per person for a double occupancy in a very nice balcony room, while singles are approximately $360. This includes all the meals and entertainment onboard (á-la-cart and great choices of first class dining, all meals 24/7), but excludes shore trips and drinks."

Back Stage at MIPCOM

A TV Market Is Only Worth The Stands In Which It Stands

The stand is the pride of every market exhibitor, but ultimately it tends to take a secondary role to other trade show accessories, such as hotel accommodations and restaurant reservations. Perhaps this is because stands are taken for granted and hotels are not!

Only a few marketers seem to appreciate the small city of stands that magically appears in the Palais des Festivals in Cannes every April for MIP-TV and October for MIPCOM. Like magic, the stands disappear as soon as the market ends.

Company booths reflect a company's personality and serve as functional meeting places that facilitate business. And everything counts: from the color of the walls to the wall-less environment; from the comfort of the chairs to the material of the floor.

If one takes a moment to glance around the convention floor, it's immediately apparent that many of the market's booths are attractive, well designed and luxuriously furnished. And though it is often overlooked, stand design for trade shows like MIPCOM and MIP-TV is a booming industry in itself.

The cost of a new booth design often determines whether a company can expand or simply change exhibition space. In addition, booths have to be stored after being dismantled, which represents an added expenditure. High costs associated with assembling, dismantling, storing and transporting stands was the main reason that NATPE changed from an itinerant TV trade show into a fixed-location market. Market organizers are also very conscious of exhibition space rental versus the cost of the booths to the point of not encouraging expansion due to low-cost floor space, which could ultimately make stand costs unreasonably high; something that NATPE experienced, transforming into a hotel-suite type event.

Indeed, it looks as though the physically heavy side of a market is also its light side in terms of the buzz it creates.

For companies that need only a bare bones set-up, MIPCOM market organizer Reed Midem provides the essentials. No-frills furniture, partitions and sign posting come free of charge with the exhibitor's contract and are set up by Reed's staff. Upgrades to the MIP Superior, MIP Deluxe, and MIP Pavilion packages are also available for an increased fee beginning at 180 euro per square meter. For companies that need nothing more than a simple center of operations, the Reed Midem offerings are more than sufficient. But for those that want that extra "wow" factor, dedicated stand design companies are de rigueur.

Steve Gibson is the Business Development director of 2heads, a company based in the U.K. with offices in Cannes, Los Angeles, Dubai and Hong Kong, that designs and constructs trade show booths across a number of industries. This year at MIPCOM, 2heads will put together stands for an impressive roster of clients, some of which will count themselves among the market's biggest and most elaborate. The list includes The Walt Disney Company, Sony Pictures Television, BBC Worldwide, ITV Studios, FremantleMedia, Shine International, National Geographic, and Fox International (U.K.).

With 25 years in the business and 10 years of experience furnishing the halls of the Palais for MIPCOM and MIP-TV, the 2heads team has stand construction down to a science. And, according to Gibson, there is a lot more to it than constructing a booth and coordinating the various suppliers.

"First, you need to understand the exhibitor's brand, business objectives for attending the market, and the way they engage with their customers and industry peers," he said. "With this knowledge the design team can create the perfect experience from arriving at the booth, to viewing the latest content, negotiating, and entertaining the delegates."

After getting a handle on the company's needs, 2heads proceeds to the design stage, which is also an involved process. The proposed design must be constructed, shipped to the site, and installed according to a timeline and within the allotted budget. This involves Gibson and his team liaising between the exhibitor and a number of suppliers for materials, graphics, furnishings, audio visual needs, catering, florists, freight companies, and the organizers.

Sound exhausting? It's just the beginning. Gibson explained that his projects also often involve, "Putting together integrated marcoms campaigns comprising advertising, printed material, invitation programs, promotional gifts, parties and live stunts to promote a company's presence at the market." When all is said and done, a booth with a tradeshow lifetime of four to five days can take four to six months of planning.

Undoubtedly, the cost of materials, manpower, and transportation can add up. Where pricing is concerned, firms like 2heads tend to work with exhibitor's budgets rather than offering predetermined, all-inclusive deals like Reed Midem. Steel Swift of New York, Los Angeles and Cannes-based Tangram International said of pricing: "[We do] not offer a set package for these markets. That is a different tier of service. However, we work to any budget. We help clients determine their budget and then match their overall requirements to an exhibit that has

(Continued on Page 34)

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(Continued from Page 32)

materials and structural components that fit within that budget. It is our role to maximize their impact."

This year, Tangram is constructing a whopping 12 MIPCOM booths, and giving 2heads a run for its money with clients such as Twentieth Century Fox, AETN, HBO, Televisa, Telefe and Entertainment One. And when construction time rolls around, Tangram certainly has a leg up with its Cannes office situated just five kilometers from the Palais. Still, Swift acknowledged, "Coordinating [out-of-country] exhibitions is more complicated than domestic [events]," and highlighted a slew of logistical hurdles such as time zones, customs clearance, international rules and regulations and cultural differences, that make his job more difficult.

Nevertheless, Swift described the whole process as "seamless," perhaps a product of his company's 24 years of experience. Having mounted what he described as "literally thousands of exhibitions in the Palais des Festivals in Cannes," Swift pointed out that communication is crucial. "The best projects are true collaborations between our team and a client team," he said. And equally important are relationships with vendors, the technical staff at the Palais and subcontractors.

With their studio-heavy client lineups, 2heads and Tangram probably represent the extreme of the amount of work that goes into a booth. But this is not to say that companies that design for indies and smaller firms are less meticulous. Sandra Trienens of Munich-based Schaffensraum6 has put together booths for a host of companies including Studio100 Media, Telcast, German Films, German United Distributors, and Bigpoint, all of which are headquartered in Germany. She said of the process, "The design and construction is unique for each company and represents their corporate identity. They are branded with company logos, colors, themed 'highlights,' special decorations and more for every show or market."

Schaffensraum6 and partner company design atelier have tons of trade show experience, and have been working MIPCOM for 10 years and 20 years respectively. Trienens too rattled off a longer list of tasks for which her company is responsible, including a number of responsibilities that have assuredly never crossed the market-goers' minds. For instance, after the booth is transported to the Palais, what becomes of the packing supplies in which it came? This and other minutiae is why companies like Trienen's are hired.

So, when the halls of the Palais are flooded with hordes of executives this MIPCOM, let's keep in mind the small army of people who created the man-made environment. While waiting for a meeting on a plush couch, or enjoying a glass of champagne from a Riviera-view tent, let's take a moment to appreciate the harmony of the stand. Because, after all, well-executed exhibition booths are, as Tangram's Swift put it, "the perfect marriage of architecture and graphic design." **ES**

U.S. Networks Go Back To Basics for 2010 Season

By Leah Hochbaum Rosner

What a difference a year makes. While the 2009 U.S. TV season was riddled with quick-to-fail medical shows (like NBC's *Trauma* and *Mercy*), high-concept ratings disasters (á la ABC's *Flash Forward*) and the debacle that was NBC's primetime *The Jay Leno Show*, the 2010 schedule is (mostly) lacking in hospital drama and is devoid of anything even remotely resembling a watered-down version of *Lost* or a talk show during 8-11 p.m. hours. In fact, the most striking thing about the U.S. fall TV calendar is that it seems to have gone back to basics, with the Big Four Networks and the CW opting for spin-offs of long-running hits and reboots of past television triumphs in the hopes that familiarity will breed, well, the opposite of contempt — in terms of ratings, that is.

Indeed, of the new network shows on tap for the autumn slate, several series fall into this category. The CW is offering up *Nikita*, a modernized *La Femme Nikita*. NBC has *Law & Order: Los Angeles*. And CBS is bringing an updated version of '60s police hit *Hawaii Five-O* to U.S. airwaves. Additionally, the Eye Network will air *S#*! My Dad Says*, a William Shatner comedy based on a Twitter sensation.

"Remakes can be attractive because they have been successful in the past," said Keith Le Goy, president, International Distribution, Sony Pictures Television, just prior to the upfronts that took place in May in New York City. "There is less of a marketing hurdle because the shows are recognizable brands."

But when the brand isn't recognizable, sometimes it helps to have a bona fide star at the helm. *The Shield*'s Michael Chiklis headlines ABC's *No Ordinary Family*, a drama about a clan that discovers it has superpowers, while Fox has *Running Wilde*, a comedy about a Beverly Hills man (*Arrested Development*'s Will Arnett) trying to buy the heart of his childhood sweetheart (*Felicity*'s Keri Russell). And

The cast of ABC's Mr. Sunshine

come midseason, NBC is offering up *The Paul Reiser Show*, which features the erstwhile *Mad About You* star as a man struggling to balance marriage, fatherhood and friendship, while Matthew Perry stars in the Alphabet Net's *Mr. Sunshine*, a sitcom in which the *Friends* alum plays the manager of a San Diego sports arena

"A star can certainly help sell a show, but television also makes stars," said Le Goy, whose own Sony Pictures Television is distributing *Mr. Sunshine*. "Remember that so many of the big feature film stars started their careers on TV — Tom Hanks, George Clooney, Adam Sandler. Certain stars are just beloved by audiences."

And so are certain presidents. Due to what many are calling the "Obama Effect," the broadcast nets are finally entrusting lead roles on more than a few dramas to non-white actors. Maggie Q plays the title role in the CW's *Nikita*. Blair Underwood is the U.S. president in NBC's *The Event*. Unknowns Boris Kodjoe and Gugu Mbatha-Raw star as retired spies brought back into the fray in the Peacock Net's *Undercovers*. And Jimmy Smits plays a former judge who starts his own law firm in NBC's *Outlaw*. Furthermore, CBS will air a *Criminal Minds* spin-off starring Forest Whitaker as an FBI investigator come January.

In an interview given to *The Hollywood Reporter*, Nina Tassler, Entertainment president of CBS said, "Diversity has always been a priority." She added, "It is a conscious choice across the board to pay attention and to add diversity any way we can. Whitaker was also the best actor for the job," she added.

To compare, last year's pilots featured only one minority leading man: LL Cool J in the CBS series *NCIS: Los Angeles*. In 2008, there wasn't a single show headlined by a non-Caucasian actor.

Where this onscreen diversity is both unforeseen and grossly overdue, the networks' ravenous appetite for comedies this season is completely unsurprising. The colossal success of year-old ABC sitcoms *Modern Family*, *Cougar Town* and *The Middle* have prompted the other networks to try their damnedest to copy that unbeatable funny formula.

CBS has *Mike and Molly*, a multi-camera laffer from producer Chuck Lorre (*The Big Bang Theory*, *Two and a Half Men*) about a couple that overeats, as well as *S#*! My Dad Says*, about a young man and his incredibly opinionated dad. Fox has *Raising Hope*, which centers on a slacker who becomes a single father after a one-night stand is sent to jail, plus the aforementioned *Running Wilde*. NBC is offering up *Outsourced*, about a customer service manager sent to India to oversee a call center. Even ABC is hoping to once again strike comedy gold with *Better With You*, a series about two very different sisters and their very different approaches to relationships. In fact, the network has such high hopes for the show that it's launching it as part of a Wednesday night comedy block that includes blockbusters *Modern Family*, *Cougar Town* and *The Middle*.

Sitcoms seem to rule the roost this season, but there is also the usual glut of police and legal dramas with which to contend. NBC boasts *Chase*, about a female U.S. marshal who tracks down dangerous fugitives and *Undercovers*, the tale of a couple of former spies yanked out of retirement to work for the CIA. CBS has *Blue Bloods*, which revolves around a family of cops in New York City; *The Defenders*, about two Las Vegas attorneys; and the *Hawaii Five-O* update. ABC's *Detroit 1-8-7* takes a look at a homicide squad in the Motor City. The network is also home to *The Whole Truth*, a legal drama from the mind of Jerry Bruckheimer; and *Body of Proof*, a procedural centering on a female medical examiner who solves crimes. Even cable TV is getting in on the lawyerly action with TNT giving the green light for *Franklin & Bash*, a dramedy that stars *Saved By the Bell*'s Mark-Paul Gosselaar and *Rat Race*'s Breckin Meyer as rogue attorneys who do things their own way at a stuffy Los Angeles firm. The show will premiere midseason.

Whereas cop and courtroom dramas are on the rise, medical-themed shows

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Breckin Meyer and Mark-Paul Gosselaar in TNT's Franklin & Bash


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Fall Season [Continued]

(Continued from Page 36)

Fox's Raising Hope

seem to have fallen out of vogue. As a matter of fact, there's only one series set in a hospital on tap this season: the midseason entry *Off the Map*, about three docs who toil in a tropical clinic.

Another exception to the rule this fall is ABC's *No Ordinary Family*, which, following years of *Lost* copycats that have failed to perform, is the lone sci-fi entry from all the networks combined. The series, which stars Michael Chiklis (*The Shield*) and Julie Benz (*Dexter*), centers on a family that discovers they have superpowers following a plane crash. Needless to say, the entire TV industry is waiting with baited breath to see if the show soars like Superman or simply crashes and burns before it'll make any further commitments to fantastical series like these.

Whatever the American TV-viewing public is drawn to this fall, it appears that if remakes like *Hawaii Five-O* fare well, then we might very well see a reboot of this reboot in 20 years time. ●

The L.A. Screenings' Side Shows

The L.A. Screenings are not just about the new U.S. TV season. For a publication that has covered the L.A. Screenings since 1982, the most hectic part of the informal market is still covering the three days carved by the 70 or so independent companies that set up shop at the hotels. When, over the weekend, the studios take over the screenings with their new season product, the pace slows down, centering on studio visits during a seven-day period.

Then, of course, there are the studio parties, which this year included Disney, Fox and Warner Bros., while NBC-Universal offered general screenings followed by a cocktail. On the indie side, there were parties from Telefe, Venevision and Lionsgate. Plus, the traditional screenings with cocktail by Telefilms and a press conference announcing the Comarex distribution deal for teen series *Crachi*.

VideoAge was also busy with the "veterans' luncheon" now in its fifth year at the Intercontinental Hotel, which, together with the nearby Century Plaza, constitute the two hotels where the indies set up shop.

To serve the 1,500 or so international buyers that attend the L.A. Screenings, VideoAge set up an information desk and engaged the bell-captains at all hotels around Los Angeles that house buyers, to deliver its two L.A. Screenings Issues — the Latin America and Studios editions — to every room.


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Production Companies Feel Better Being Independent

By Lorena Sánchez

Telenovelas with international success are historically associated with the major Latin American TV networks, even though some of them were made by independent production companies at the networks' requests.

Today, even though the majority of those Latin American indies have been acquired by the networks themselves or assimilated into larger foreign production companies, the spirit of the indies lives on with the same high standards of professionalism, quality and experience. These companies produce for the domestic and international market, and they distinguish themselves by seeking original stories, using cinematic styles and tackling social issues.

In Mexico City, Argos Communication is an independent production company with a good track record that has produced 18 telenovelas aired in 52 countries. These productions include *Mirada de mujer*, *Nada personal* and *Ladrón de corazones*. Argos has also produced 10 movies and 9,000 hours of live TV for television networks in the U.S., Mexico and South America.

Nowadays, Argos' production output consists of *Las aparicio* for Mexico's FTA and Cable channel, CadenaTres and Telemundo's WebTV platform, Telemundo.com. *Las aparicio* is distributed by Telemundo International. Argos also puts out the new drama that will replace *Las aparicio* in the 10p.m. slot on CadenaTres, as well as the third season of *Capadocia*, a TV series for HBO Latin America. The telenovelas are recorded in HD and the TV series are filmed in 16 mm by directors experienced in filmmaking.

Ana Celia Urquidi, director of Argos TV, commented, "We're looking for telenovelas with original stories and values that are closer to the everyday life of the audience, reflecting the daily events of the world where they live. The language of the dialogue also comes from their daily lives and the performances are less theatrical and more realistic. We believe that entertainment does not have to make us forget our problems, but can make us think about them."

On-TV's Bernarda Llorente

For Urquidi, being independent means "constantly searching for new audiences without loosing followers and offering distinct alternatives to what they are used to watching." She added, "The Mexican market is very difficult, very closed and almost without options, because the key broadcasters — TV Azteca and Televisa — already have their own productions and control most of the audience."

In Bogotá, Colombia, indie production company Televideo has 30 years of experience producing television dramas, entertainment shows and news formats. In the beginning, when Colombian television was owned by the state, Televideo created content for the five regional entertainment channels and a news channel. It also produced series for other production companies. Since the privatization of the TV channels, Televideo has made telenovelas, series and miniseries for the RCN FTA channel; content of all genres for Caracol, City TV, Canal 1, Señal Colombia, regional channels and Telefutura in the U.S.; and documentaries for Discovery, National Geographic, Sun Channel and Infinito pay-TV channels. In 2006, Televideo launched YPunto, a division for original content, and today it produces more than 200 hours of drama each year. It has just finished the telenovela *Salvador de mujeres* for the Miami, Florida-based Venevision International. YPunto's production team is also working on a drama for young people, which will be available on the Internet and mobile devices.

According to Ana Margarita Rodriguez, general manager at Televideo, "Our novelas for Colombian primetime have high-quality standards and deal with all the subjects in which the audience can see their own life reflected in an entertaining way. In a booming market for Colombian producers, the quality of our productions, the creativity of our talent, our technical resources and our capability to answer to the needs of other TV windows are opening doors for us to produce for a larger and more diverse universe of clients."

In Buenos Aires, Argentina, a city of creative and entrepreneurial tradition, a number of new independent production companies dedicated to drama emerged in the last two years. They are offering their products worldwide, encouraged by Telefe International and by independent international distributors such as Silvana D'Angelo's Flor Latina.

Indie production company On-TV emerged in late 2009 when its founders Claudio Villarruel and Bernarda Llorente ended their 10-year contract as programmers for Telefe's FTA channel. Now that they are on their own, they are continuing the line of telenovelas they developed in recent years, including *Vidas robadas*, *Montecristo*, and *Resistiré*. On-TV is also working with formats and as consultants. Currently, the firm

On-TV's Claudio Villarruel

Televideo's Ana Margarita Rodriguez

is producing *Secretos de amor*, which is broadcast in the afternoon on Telefe, and *Cain and Abel* for primetime. It has also scheduled three TV movies in co-production with Telefe Contenidos.

According to Villarruel, "The market for independent producers of TV drama is on a quest for new stories, leaving the comfort of the old school formulas. We like to take chances and bet on different content with strong subject matter.

One example of this was *Montecristo*, which generated an intense public discussion about the history of the last Argentinean military dictatorship. The series' central character is the granddaughter of one of the 30,000 missing persons who were kidnapped, tortured and murdered by the military." At the same time, concluded Villarruel, "We did not want to create a company with a large framework that required working 24/7 just to sustain the structure."

Hibou Productions is another independent production company betting strongly on fiction. The owner, Lili Monsegou, is an Argentinean actress who worked in France and then returned to Argentina with the idea of producing high-quality drama. Investing her own capital, she started Hibou earlier this year and today she's filming her first production, *Guita fácil*, set in the Buenos Aires' world of tango and the tourism industry. To produce it, she assembled a team of experienced professionals, with authors such as Marcelo Camaño (*Montecristo*, *Vidas robadas*, *TV por la identidad*) and actors such as Carlos Portaluppi (*Vidas robadas*, *Mujeres asesinas*, *Vulnerables*). It is distributed by Flor Latina.

"For independent production companies it's hard work because, either they tend to be taken over by larger media groups, or they're left with little profit margins. But, we dare to make big investments because we believe in our product and our team. We look forward to making different types of dramas that tell life stories that the audience can identify with," said Monsegou.

CHE Contenidos was created by

(Continued on Page 42)


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In Argentina Exploitation Brings Ratings, Money

BY CLAUDIO BRASLAVSKY

If there is one word that could best describe the current Argentinean free TV trend, it would be "scandalous." Under normal circumstances, "scandal" describes a situation that causes public outrage. But when scandals go on TV, they become something that causes the opposite: Big ratings!

On TV, scandal is everywhere, anytime and on every channel. This has nothing to do with industry executives' private lives or the quality of programming. Rather, this characterization merely reflects the content seen on screen 24/7. And there is no escape from it.

Today in Argentina, over 115 hours a week on 15 different programs are devoted to petty social controversies. Scandal sells. Celebrity catfights and D-list private lives lived in public have become the indisputable stars of the small screen. They are the center of attention. The public seems to love it and producers and TV networks alike have taken notice.

And at the center of it all is *Bailando por un sueño*, Artear's ratings magnet produced by Buenos Aires-based Ideas del Sur. This dancing competition — now turned reality show — has dominated the airwaves for a few years. But never before has a single TV show been able to feed and dictate the content of the whole TV sector. The show's on-screen and off-screen discussions among participants, jurors and each other have become the center of attention and inspiration for dozens of other programs, including competitor's networks. Indeed, *Bailando* has been able to create a domino effect that has spilled over to other stations and their programs. These shows devote much of their airtime to reviewing/discussing/making fun of the shows themselves. This creates a situation in which everyone comes out as a winner: The TV networks have content to fill up their space and, in turn, create new situations that are, in the case of Artear, chosen by *Bailando* producers to further enhance their own show. The celebrity/scandal madness has even taken over the print media. Magazines have jumped on the bandwagon, featuring the scandal-of-the-day on the cover and in various articles.

This trend, however, is not really new. In recent years there has been a proliferation of local shows known as *programas de archivos* (TV files/archives programs) that devote most of their time to reviewing and ridiculing what's happening on TV. Recent additions to the list include Telefe's *Zapping*, Artear's *Este es el show* and *Demoliendo teles* plus the classics: America TV network's *Intrusos* and *RSM*, Canal 9's *Bendita TV* and *Duro de domar* and many others. And why not? The economics work. After all, creating "archives" programming is inexpensive. Stations just need a charismatic host, a panel of dubious, opinionated characters and a good set of editors that, using borrowed images from other shows, create humorous reports. These recaps even cover other TV shows that cover other shows. TV is feeding itself in a vicious free-for-all circle.

Artear, which had struggled with its daytime ratings for years, has been able to turn it around by programming *Este es el show*, a magazine-type show that offers an exclusive backstage pass to *Bailando* and confronts the participants of the show live on the set.

With instant celebrities taking the place of real artists and actors, there is little room for fiction. The few locally produced dramas have decreased in number over the years, but they still do well in the ratings. Last year, Artear's *Valientes* was the biggest hit on TV (this year is a rerun). This season, Artear's *Malparida* and Telefe's *Botineras* are doing well, offering an alternative to those viewers with an appetite for quality storytelling. Soaps are also decent performers in their time slots. Artear and Telefe are producing one each, *Secretos de amor* and *Alguien que me quiera*, respectively. Channel 9, whose drama programming consists exclusively of foreign soaps — it shows seven a day — attracts a good number of its core female viewers. For a younger target audience Telefe has a winner with *Casi angeles* (*Teen Angels*), from the Buenos Aires-based Cris Morena group.

But how long will the appeal of scandal last? Has the viewing public become so easily addicted to it that nothing else satisfies its needs? Or are TV producers not giving the viewers other options? Will the public get saturated at some point and turn a blind eye? Will the new digital channels bring a variety of programming alternatives for those who want to see something different, or will they have to turn to the always-reliable cable? Only time will tell. In the meantime, scandal is keeping us watching. ●

Telefe's Botineras

Telefe's Zapping

Claudio Braslavsky is president of Dexterity Entertainment, a Buenos Aires-based international distribution company, focusing on Latin American TV, and a former VP of acquisitions for AVF.

Indies in Latin America (Continued)

(Continued from Page 40)

producer and director Pablo Yotich two years ago with the aim of producing content freely without being tied to the restrictions of a channel. "At first, the idea of independent production was a utopia, but today we are selling our content to different countries. Upcoming products include *Room for Three*, a comedy co-produced with international distributor Flor Latina; several documentaries, as well as our first finished film, and a second one, which is in the development stage. We make programs for the entire family, strengthening the social elements, which tend to be missing in current television products," commented Paul Yotich, CEO of CHE Contenidos.

In all cases, financial arrangements vary from project to project. Channels can buy the finished product if the producers have investors to finance the productions. The TV outlets can also be co-producers, providing sets and crews, while production companies contribute with the cast and the creative team. The production agreement may also include the sharing of advertising revenue. Depending on the arrangements, the channel can also evaluate whether to keep the international distribution rights.

Costs per telenovela vary from country to country, with Argentina averaging the equivalent of U.S.$15,000 per episode, and Colombia and Mexico starting at $45,000. In Mexico it is not unusual for a telenovela to reach the $5 million mark.

As far as the number of episodes per each drama feature, a telenovela is made up of 120 to 150 episodes, each series has between 13 and 26, and miniseries consist of five episodes. ●

Big Changes Await Latin America's Largest TV Market

By Maria Zuppello

The future has finally arrived in Brazil. The country is an economic and political world leader with a seat at the globe's most influential table, and the television industry is pioneering innovative approaches to give Brazilians a new voice.

Twenty years after pay-TV began in Brazil, much has changed. Up to now, the sector has been slow to penetrate into a country where the powerful free-to-air TV networks reach more than 50 million households. However, a new draft law (simply called "No.29") is going to completely change the scene.

Through a new licenses auction, regulated by the Brazilian government (the last one took place 10 years ago), the satellite TV market will open up for new entrants, this time for foreign Telcos that are already operating in the territory. These include Mexico's Telmex, Spain's Telefonica and Oi/Brasil Telecom. Telefonica bought a stake in cable operator TVA in 2006, launching a satellite operation with partner Grupo Editorial Abril in São Paulo State, while Oi/Brasil Telecom bought cable company WayTV in 2006 and launched a pay-TV service in the Rio de Janeiro State using DTH satellite technology last July. These new satellite TV entrants are already in the territory, and they are making investments in infrastructure and technology that domestic companies alone would not be able to sustain.

In this regard, Sky Brasil, the satellite operator born from the 2006 merger of Sky and DirecTV that serves 1.8 million subscribers, announced that it had reached an agreement with distributor NET Brasil to launch eight high-definition pay-TV channels. Sky Brasil president Luiz Eduardo Baptista also announced a service that will allow subs to watch digital free-to-air local channels thanks to a new set-top box that will be connected to the operator's regular satellite converter.

The draft of the new law is expected to be approved by Parliament in the next few months, very close to the presidential election.

In addition to solidifying the country into a powerful Telcos giant, the new law requires that major U.S. studios, such as Sony and Fox, co-produce projects set in Brazil with local independent producers on a yearly basis. The goal is to stimulate the television market into diversifying from the virtual programming monopoly that Globo TV has held over the years.

"It's a great and unique opportunity for Brazil," said André Merlmestein, Converge Comunicaçoes's editorial director. "This new law will help compensate for years of Globo TV's monopoly in terms of television production."

Among other advantages that Law No.29 will be providing is new production incentives worth an estimated U.S.$200 million per year, and created in part by the government tax on telecommunications (the tax that Telcos have to pay for doing business in Brazil).

"I do not see any risks in this new scenario," commented Merlmestein, "It's a card to play. Perhaps the only risk is to create a dependency on funds, but it is just the beginning."

According to Gil Ribeiro, owner of Mixer, one of the most active independent production companies in Brazil, "This new law has the potential to generate quantity and quality television programs that allow the industry to grow and show its full potential."

André Guerra, CEO and executive producer of AG7 production house is a bit more skeptical. "The market for pay-TV is still controlled by a few players," he said. "The new government's production incentives make me doubt its effectiveness due to our country's bureaucracy. Suffice it to say that to qualify for any subsidy, producers need the help of experts who specialize in filling out forms and preparing proposals, all of which takes months."

André Guerra, CEO and executive producer of AG7 production house

According to some estimates, the pay-TV audience is going to grow quickly. Millions of Brazilian families were able to move up into the middle class in recent years, and became hooked to the strong appeal of broadband services.

Over the next five years the current count of 8.5 million broadband subscribers (serving about 30 million viewers) is expected to double.

Good results have also come from the so-called "Funcines" investments. These are private investment funds for audiovisual projects that give tax breaks to those who invest. TV Culture, for example, has created a fund for investments in animation and feature film, focusing on children and youth.

TV Culture is a TV network originally created by the government of the state of São Paulo in 1967, but later "donated" to Fundação Padre Anchieta, a privately held company.

One TV network that has grown the most in recent years in Brazil is São Paulo-based Rede Record. In particular, 2009 was a record-breaking year for the network. Thanks to programs like reality shows *A Fazenda* and *Aprendiz 6*, Rede Record has considerably exceeded Globo TV's ratings. Similarly, Globo's *Jornal Nacional*, the most formidable competitor to Rede Record's *Jornal*, lost viewers, falling from 46.6 points to 34.1, while *Jornal da Record* grew from 3.1 points to 11.7.

In addition, for the first time in the history of Brazilian TV, Rede Record provided live coverage of the Vancouver, Canada Winter Olympics.

"In the second half of 2010," said Delmar Andrade, Rede Record's director of International Sales, "The network will air the soap opera *Rebelde*, a major production in partnership with Mexico's Televisa, and the third installment of the reality show *A Fazenda*." This in addition to the biblical recreation of *Sansão and Delilah* and *A História do Rei Davi*, two important dramas for a network owned by Bishop Edir Macedo, founder of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.

Delmar Andrade, Rede Record director of International Sales

Among the reasons for Rede Record's success is the weight the network gives to investigative journalism and social issues, especially issues such as crime and public safety, about which Brazilian TV audiences want debates.

The Brazilian television industry is definitely changing, and as a result there is now a fast-moving management turnover. For example, Elisabetta Zenatti, who was head of Programming and Production at free-to-air TV channel Bandeirantes, will lead Floresta, a new production house that Sony Pictures Television has created in Brazil. Earlier, Carla Affonso, formerly Endemol Globo's managing director, moved to Mixer as a Content executive; Paolo Markun, formerly TV Cultura president, moved to Rede Gazeta, a Brazilian television network based in São Paulo; and Rogerio Brandao, former Rede Gazeta's head of Programming is now the Programming supervisor of TV Brasil, the first public broadcasting television network launched in 2007 by the federal government. Additionally, Mafran Dutra, former Rede Record executive vice-president is now heading to Rede Record's artistic committee for programming and production.

André Mermelstein, editorial director, Converge Comunicaçoes


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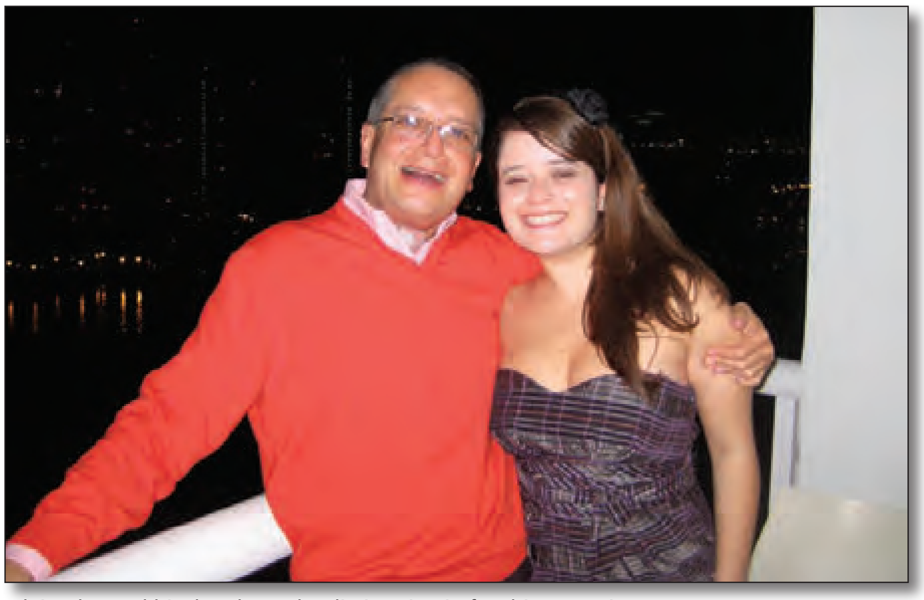
In Memoriam

Alejandro Garcia Ramon: 1954-2010

Alejandro Garcia Ramon worked under some of the industry's top international TV executives, such as Dick O'Leary at ABC in the U.S., Roberto I. Marinho at Rede Globo in Brazil, Peter Bottome at RCTV in Venezuela; then back in the U.S. with Jim McNamara and Armando Nuñez, Jr. at New World and Universal, Dorien Sutherland and T.C. Schultz at Sony Pictures, and Marcos Santana at Telemundo International. Despite his numerous posts, he rarely wanted a release to be sent to the press, and at each new post, or when returning to a company, Garcia made friends who, as a result of his involvement, became friends and business partners of people he previously worked for.



Alejandro and his daughter Claudia in Miami after his operation.

Garcia first entered the U.S. via Louisiana, when he went to study at Loyola Marymount University in New Orleans, before transferring to Syracuse University in New York two years later, where he graduated in 1978. In college he studied television in order to follow in the footsteps of his father, Alejandro Garcia, Sr., a Cuban-born advertising and TV executive in Venezuela, who married Ofelia Ramon y Rivera, a popular Venezuelan singer.

VideoAge first encountered the young Garcia in New York in 1981; three years later he accompanied *VideoAge*'s editor, Dom Serafini, to Caracas to coordinate a front cover feature story on RCTV — then Venezuela's top TV network where he was an executive — which appeared in the April 1983 Issue of the magazine. Except for a few brief interludes, the professional career of Alejandro (as virtually everyone called him) was always part of *VideoAge*'s coverage of companies he was involved with, starting with ABC, RCTV and Rede Globo; then Disney, New World, Universal, Sony Pictures and Telemundo.

Perhaps the combination of a business-oriented father and an artistic mother made Alejandro's life a mix of an upbeat business career and a dramatic personal life, which culminated with his death caused by throat cancer at the age of 56. The cancer was diagnosed in 2004, and he first received radiotherapy and chemotherapy in Houston, Texas, though he later underwent a major operation where he lost his vocal cords.

Nonetheless, it's hard to remember or imagine Alejandro publicly complaining. One of his assistants at Universal told *VideoAge* she was "most impressed by his sense of humor and the ability to generate a good vibe." Commented Dorien Sutherland, who hired Alejandro at Sony: "[He] spent two short years with us, but [they] were crucial years for our channels Sony and AXN. [Alejandro] was a natural TV channel guy with a great sense of humor. He was very much a people person. Always concerned with the human side of those who reported to him."

The U.S. gave him the drive that allowed him to steer his career wherever he wanted to go. And he loved his adoptive country to the point that, after the Hugo Chávez regime takeover, he allowed his Venezuelan passport to expire and just kept his acquired American one.

But not all his American experiences were smooth sailing. His move to Miami, for example, proved traumatic, resulting in a divorce from his wife Carolina, who was still in Caracas with two of their children, Claudia, now 27 and living in Miami, and Javier, now 30, still in Caracas. Inspired by Alejandro, Claudia moved to Miami in 2003 and went to work in the TV industry for Imagina, distributing TV signals, while Javier became a professional musician.

Of his professional accomplishments, he was particularly proud of the telenovelas he produced including *Amor descarado* and *Dona Barbara*.

When asked about the best advice that Alejandro had given to his daughter Claudia, she said: "*El amor tumba montañas, derrumba muros y mueve oceanos*! (Love climbs mountains, breaks walls and moves oceans!). To him, love cured everything in life."

A young Alejandro

His Professional Life

After graduating from Syracuse University in New York in 1978, Alejandro Garcia trained in the U.S. at the ABC-TV station in New York City, under ABC O&O's president Dick O'Leary. Garcia returned to his native Venezuela in 1979 to become RCTV's executive producer in Caracas. Subsequently, in 1980 he moved to Rio De Janeiro, Brazil to work at Rede Globo as sales manager of programs for Latin America.

In 1982, Garcia went back to RCTV in Caracas as production and programming manager and in 1984 he returned to New York, moving into advertising as national sales manager for WNJU (Ch.47), now part of the Telemundo TV network.

In 1984, he left for Los Angeles to start the Spanish-language TV station KVEA (Ch. 52) on behalf of Joe Wallach, an American who was an executive at Rede Globo. Later, the station became part of Telemundo.

After the L.A. project in 1987, Garcia moved once again to Caracas as president of Ten and Twelve Entertainment, a radio and TV promotion and production group that was owned by RCTV. This was followed up by a general manager position at RCTV's TeleArte, also in the commercial production field.

In 1990, he briefly went back to RCTV as programming and acquisitions manager before returning to the U.S. in the same year as director of Programming, Latin America for Disney, based in Miami.

Two years later, in 1992, at the suggestion of Angel Gonzalez, Jim McNamara hired Garcia as managing director, Iberoamericana for distribution company New World International.

After the company was taken over by Fox in 1996, he followed his executive friends, Armando Nuñez, Jr., and McNamara at Universal Studios as vice president, international TV Latin America. Former CEO at New World, McNamara became president of Universal Television Enterprises in charge of both U.S. and international distribution, while Nuñez, former president of New World International Television Distribution, became president of Universal International Television (now he's president of CBS Studios International Television).

Subsequently, in 1999, Garcia joined Argos in Mexico City before moving back to Miami shortly thereafter in the year 2000 to work for Sony Pictures under Dorien Sutherland and T.C. Schultz. Late in 2002, he went to Telemundo as senior vice president of Programming, and later moved to Telemundo Studios to produce novelas such as *Amor descarado* and *Anita no te rajes* with Patricio Willis and Marcos Santana.

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Places To Go, Customs To Find. A *Vademecum*

By Yuri Serafini

VideoAge's role is to chronicle mainly the what, when and where of the global television industry. This time, we added another task: report on the "dos" and the "don'ts" in the social business environment, such as a TV trade show like MIPCOM. After all, helping executives avoid embarrassing situations can also be a valuable service of the trade press.

Even though most of the social dos and don'ts tid-bits were collected in various locations, their value still resonates outside the country of origin.

For example, some Asian countries are used to bumbling foreigners unfamiliar with local standards of courtesy. **Japanese** people, in particular, try to be accommodating, especially in a business setting. But if a visiting TV executive were to be rushed to the hospital, he or she should know that the doctor would expect a tip, but the taxi driver who took the executive there would not. Similarly, waiters don't like to be tipped. Also, everyone one meets is going to expect a business card, and it is considered impolite if one writes a note on the back.

If, on a business trip to Japan, the TV executive were to stop by nearby **South Korea**, it is important to remember never to give gifts in multiples of four, as it is considered an unlucky number.

Conversely, in **China**, gifts in multiples of four are fine, as long as they're not green hats, which are considered unlucky objects. Clocks are also frowned upon, seeing as they're associated with death. Chinese TV executives do, however, appreciate being presented with business cards held by both hands.

In **India**, never open or unwrap a gift in front of the giver. Also never wear a leather jacket, no matter how cool it looks. Anything obtained from cows is a no-go.

While in **France**, tattoos should be hidden as they aren't very welcome in the workplace.

Driving safely is perhaps a cliché in **Germany**, where there are no speed limits on the Autobahn, only "suggested" speeds. Also, being on time and keeping your hands out of your pockets is considered respectful.

But respect takes a new meaning in the **Netherlands**, where spitting in public is a misdemeanor.

Courtesy takes an even higher form in **Austria**, where the people are extremely formal, soft-spoken and law abiding. It's important to know that they are different from Germans, and to say *prost* ("cheers") to others before sharing a beer.

Never confuse a **Uruguayan** with an Argentinean, since they consider themselves very different. Also, it is important to show appreciation for national football hero, Diego Forlan, who has been elevated to the level of William Tell in Switzerland.

When working out deals in **Slovakia**, always order a bottle of mineral water. Slovakians are so sure that their bottled water is good that they believe it even cures heartburn.

That which Slovakians attribute to their water, **Namibians** attribute to their beer. The southern African country was once a German colony, and Namibians believe it is their patriotic duty to drink beer because it is produced locally and thus creates employment. TV execs are advised to carry headache tablets, even though they are available in any general store.

When having a beer in **Sweden**, on the other hand, be prepared to tell the bartender exactly how many "centiliters" he needs to pour. Plus, as in all Nordic countries, the weather is an important conversation topic. So much so that almost everyone owns a barometer, which is therefore not a necessary gift.

Across the North Sea in **Finland**, awkward takes on a completely new meaning, as occasional silences are normal parts of conversation. When TV execs go out for drinks, they can drain their glasses without saying a word. If a visiting exec tries to break the ice, the only response could be, "Are we here to drink or talk?"

Conversely, in **Puerto Rico**, expect great conversation, especially in front of a TV monitor. Watching television is a very social activity in Puerto Rico, and it is considered unreasonable and impolite to keep quiet.

When going for drinks in **Russia**, there is no need to insist on having ice cubes. Luckily, the weather seldom gets very hot, the exception being this past summer in Moscow and environs where temperatures reached record highs.

If, on the other hand, a deal takes a TV exec to **Saudi Arabia**, intoxication won't be a problem. Publicly, Budweiser is available in an apple-flavored non-alcoholic version only. At MIPCOM be prepared to attend cocktail parties hosted by Muslim countries with fruit juices and sodas only.

When visiting **Mexican** TV stands expect hugs and kisses from both men and women. Don't be intimidated.

When headed to **Croatia**, travel light as 15 percent of the country's visitors are nudists.

Brazilians, laid back in many respects, take offense to foreigners wearing the national flag colors. Also, if TV executives are guests at a small TV station manager's home in rural areas, houses are unlikely to have doorbells. The way to get the host's attention is to stand in the yard and clap.

In **Thailand**, never ever drop, step on, or disrespect money, even if it's loose change — it has the king's face on it, and national symbols like the king are taken very seriously.

When visiting the **Canadian** city of Montreal, it is important to remember that according to the locals, the city is not in Canada, but in Quebec. Also, anything in the direction of the river is south, and everything in the direction of Mt. Royal is north, regardless of actual orientation (the river is indeed east of the city, but there is no sense arguing about it).

In **Iceland**, TV executives should keep in mind that surnames are patronymic, and as such, everyone is simply referred to by first name (even in phonebooks).

"In China, gifts in multiples of four are fine, as long as they're not green hats, which are considered unlucky objects. Clocks are also frowned upon, seeing as they're associated with death.

During meetings with Americans, it's best to refrain from making disparaging comments about blacks, Jews, Italian-Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, Asian-Americans, Polish-Americans, Irish Catholics, homosexuals, handicapped people, the armed forces and how difficult it is to sing the *Star-Spangled Banner*. A safe bet is to talk about the weather and Sarah Palin.

Finally, when invited to **Italian** homes for lunch or dinner, never arrive on time to avoid embarrassing the hosts, who could be found still in their bathrobes or preparing the table. Also, never wear any type of hat at the dinner table. ●

"It's customary in the United States to have your secretary explain things to my secretary."

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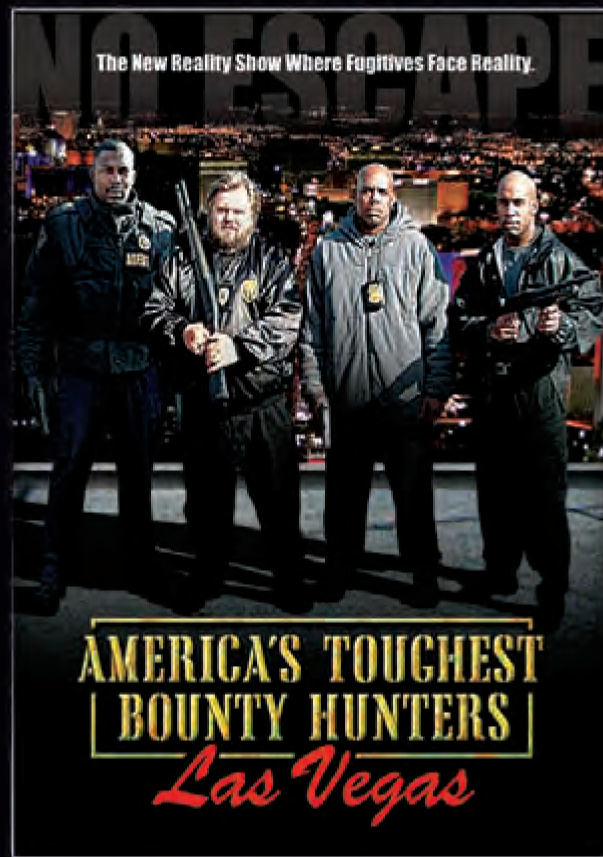


CHEATERS

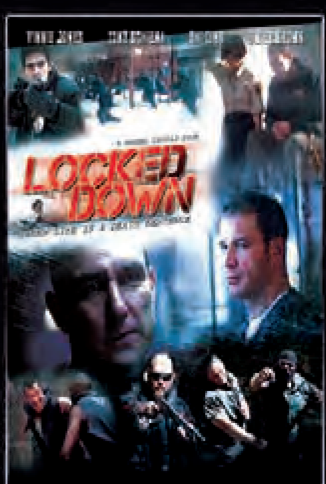
(Reality Series / 220 one-hours, 440 half-hours)

Cheating spouses beg for mercy in this scandalous reality series where victims catch cheaters red-handed. Now in its 11th Season, CHEATERS has dominated its time slots in U.S. Free TV syndication and on the U.S. cable TV network, G4.

LAS VEGAS BOUNTY HUNTERS

(Investigative Reality Series / 20 half-hour episodes)

In this explosive reality series, the nation's toughest bounty hunter, Fred Slack, rides into Sin City with a Las Vegas-based team of bounty hunters. Cinematic sound design and break-neck pacing takes the investigative reality genre to a new level of excitement.



LOCKED DOWN

(Prison Drama / 90 mins)

Danny, a undercover cop, is framed for drugs and sent to a federal prison with inmates he put away. Inside a Mafia Boss wants the cop dead but wants to make money in a cage fight match. Reluctant to fight, it all comes to a showdown.

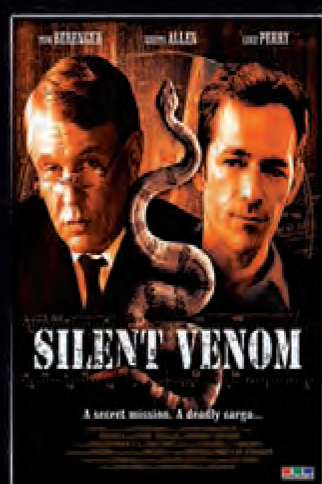
STARRING: Vinnie Jones (*Snatch, X-men: The Last Stand*), Tony Schiena (*The Merchant of Venice, Circle of Pain*), Bai Ling (*Crank 2, The Crow, Wild Wild West*) and Dwier Brown (*Field of Dreams*)

TALES OF AN ANCIENT EMPIRE

(Action Adventure / 90 mins)

A beautiful Princess undertakes a quest to unite five of the world's greatest warriors in an effort to save her kingdom from an evil demon Sorceress!

STARRING: Kevin Sorbo (*Hercules, Meet The Spartans*), Christopher Lambert (*Highlander, Mortak Combat*) and Oliver Gruner (*Nemesis*)

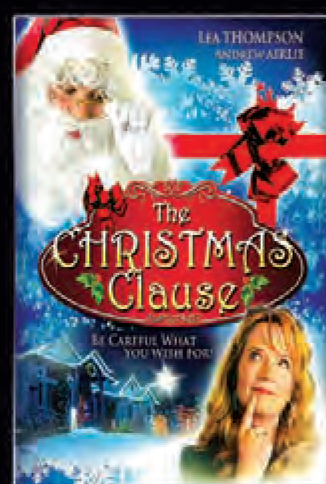


SILENT VENOM

(Disaster Thriller / 90 mins)

A decommissioned submarine crew on a secret mission finds itself trapped between the Chinese military and crate loads of genetically mutated snakes that have infiltrated every nook and cranny of the sub!

STARRING: Luke Perry (*90210*), Tom Berringer (*Platoon, Major League*), Krista Allen and Louis Mandylor



THE CHRISTMAS CLAUSE

(Holiday Drama / 90 mins)

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STARRING: Lea Thompson (*Back to the Future* Series, *Caroline in the City*) and Andrew Airlie (*Reaper, The 4400*)

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The Greater Middle East: Hollywood's Next Big Paycheck

Usually the Middle East region is grouped with North Africa under the MENA moniker. The problem is that there is confusion about the number of countries to include under MENA, since it has no standardized definition. There is also some confusion between "MENA" and "Arab countries."

For example, U.K. research company Informa, which has just published a report on the area (cost U.S.$1,566), lists 25 countries, including Turkey and Cyprus, but not Iran and Iraq. As per a program producer in Qatar, there are 22 Arab countries, but not all are located in MENA, while Iran is in the MENA region, even though it is not an Arab country.

According to Patrick Jucaud, who organizes several TV markets in Africa for his Basic Lead, there are five North-African countries: Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia and Egypt. In addition, commented Jucaud, Israel should be included in the "Greater Middle East region," while the "Broader Middle East" includes Turkey and Afghanistan.

So, for the purpose of this new account, in addition to the aforementioned North-African countries in the MENA region, the following countries are included: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, UAE and Yemen. It remains to be seen where the Palestinian territories should be located, since Palestine not yet a country.

Informa estimated that there are 78 million TVHH in the MENA (Greater Middle East) region, representing 95 percent of households, with satellite reaching 62 percent of TV families. Pay-TV households are said to number 2.4 million, excluding Israel, which Basic Lead estimated at 1.7 million subscribers.

Key satellite operators in the broader region are: Digiturk (two million subscribers); ART (1.087 million subs); E-Vision (340,000, including cable and IPTV); OSN, which is the result of a merger between Orbit and Showtime (603,000 subs), and HOT (in Israel with 908,000 subs via cable and MMDS). In addition, Canal Plus now reaches North Africa, but it is not a major player in MENA. Because 75 percent of the population of this region is under the age of 35, online TV services are gathering momentum.

In terms of content, sports (especially football), news, movies and drama series are the region's popular fare. Most watched shows come from the U.S. studios. There is also a good number of programs originating and exchanged within MENA areas. However, very little production from the region is seen outside MENA, with the exception of ethnic channels scattered throughout the worldwide Arab communities.


Mahyad Tousi

If the region lacks exportable content, it certainly makes up for it in resources, especially financial resources and viewership. And these resources are the leverage of two young entrepreneurs who have taken on the challenge of marrying Hollywood with MENA.

BoomGen Studios (BGS) is a New York and Los Angeles-based cross platform media and entertainment company founded in 2007 by Mahyad Tousi and Reza Aslan that is trying to change the perception of the Middle East by helping to create high profile film and TV shows from or about the region. BGS is designed to provide creative input, publicity and marketing to Hollywood's production community. Even though it was founded three years ago, the company is still in a start-up phase and what it might lack in financial resources is made up in enthusiasm, film expertise and knowledge of the Middle East.

VideoAge asked the two partners to illustrate their strategy and business model.

VideoAge International: *Why is the Greater Middle East region interested in financing films produced in Hollywood?*

BoomGen Studios: With much of the liquidity out there in the Middle East, the regional players now enjoy greater leverage than they ever did. This, coupled with the failure of studios and independent producers to make the hedge fund/slate model work, makes for much more interesting deals for anyone who holds the purse strings, and gives them unprecedented access to Hollywood, the greatest storytelling factory around.

VAI: *From a financial standpoint, enlighten us regarding your selection and go-forward process?*

BGS: We focus on creating and championing commercial entertainment projects that also have the ability to reframe perceptions of the peoples and cultures of the Middle East, North Africa and Central/South Asia — a region with a rich history of storytelling. These could be smaller character-driven dramas, slapstick comedies, or epics rooted in the rich mythology of this vast region. The important factor is that the project fits our financing model. For instance, we are very much interested in projects that have strong "Transmedia" potential. Right now our portfolio consists of two comedies, comic book properties, and an international political thriller.

VAI: *It is clear in financial terms, but in cultural terms, what unique advantages regarding film development/production does this region possess?*

BGS: With regards to infrastructure, this region still has a long way to go, though there are major efforts in play to develop expertise and build-out production infrastructure. Some 75 percent of the population of this region is under the age of 35, making it one of the youngest groups in the world. According to the World Economic Forum, this region also boasts the world's fastest growing consumer market. This, without a doubt, is the region's greatest advantage and asset, and the reason why there is so much interest from the majors in being part of the solution.

VAI: *Despite the soft economy, why do you believe the current time is appropriate for your venture?*

BGS: The amount of liquidity in the region, and the value of this emerging market, ensures there will be increasing interest from the studios and international players in creating content in our niche. We feel we are uniquely positioned to work with the best of these projects and, from time-to-time, put our own horses into the mix.


Reza Aslan

VAI: *Briefly, please explain the BoomGen Studios model and how it differs from what might be considered the traditional indie film model?*

BGS: BoomGen Studios is a boutique company with a narrow focus and diverse set of skills. We differentiate ourselves by having a first person understanding of content, as well as the in-house strategies and expertise to produce and market projects specific to our niche.

Providing high-end creative, public relations and marketing solutions to major studios and independents allows us to continuously hone the strategies we apply to our own branded projects.

VAI: *Will BoomGen be actively involved on the festival/trade show circuit?*

BGS: We commenced our second phase of operations this year and have multiple projects in various stages of development. We will be participating at many of the major festivals and co-production markets, as well as at the bigger festivals in the Middle East, with the intention of closing some deals and looking for new partnerships. We plan to go into production on our first feature film by next summer. ●

Portland, Oregon-born **Mahyad Tousi**, 37, is co-founder, CEO and producer. He oversees business and creative strategy for the company while serving as the lead producer for all its projects. Tousi's production experience includes *We Are New York*, a 10-part series for NY Public TV station and *Looking for Palladin*, starring Ben Gazzara and Talia Shire. Tousi's cinematography credits include *Blindsight*, directed by Lucy Walker, which was a winner at the Berlin Film Festival.

Iranian-born **Reza Aslan**, 38, co-founder and CCO, teaches creative writing at the University of California, Riverside. Aslan holds degrees in religion from Santa Clara University and Harvard; a PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara. His first book, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution and Future of Islam*, has been translated into 13 languages. He is also the author of *How to Win a Cosmic War: God, Globalization and the End of the War on Terror*, as well as editor of an anthology of modern literature from the Middle East. Aslan has worked as a consultant on feature films including *Prince of Persia*, *Rendition* and *Body of Lies*.

Difficult Shows To Sell

(Continued from Cover)

Legend has it that Americans can sell ice to the Eskimos (possibly by advertising it with different colors). To be sure, Americans did once sell common beach stones to consumers by calling them "Pet Rocks." On the other hand, some countries have the reputation of not being able to sell fire to Eskimos. But, is it a question of marketing ability, sales experience and *savoir-faire*, or simply a question of the program one is trying to sell?

After all, selling difficult shows is not just a sacrifice demanded of independent producers and distributors. Indeed, one of the non sequitors circulating within large studios — but masquerading as a joke — is that if sales executives were required to screen the difficult shows they have to sell, they would want to be paid extra.

Being a curious publication, *VideoAge* surveyed international distributors to find out what types of shows give sales executives the most trouble and why.

One of the most common answers related a show's salability with universality. Among the execs interviewed, there was widespread agreement that programming that is too regionally specific does not do well around the globe. John Cuddihy, president of Miami-based NewsProNet Video's International Division, pointed to "any product that has an overt, over the top American television look." He elaborated that series that appeal specifically to the American market often meet the refrain "it's just too local."

Irv Holender, the Los Angeles-based director and principal of Toronto, Canada's The Fremantle Corp concurred with Cuddihy. He noted that in his 40 years in the business, the hardest shows to sell "have been ones that are focused on American family and American life." Holender elaborated, "The primetime shows that we have that are more universal and are easier to dub are the best."

Holender went on to explain that the industry is evolving in such a way that international distribution is becoming more difficult in general. "With the

CCI's Arnie Zipursky

NewsProNet's John Cuddihy

recent abundance of local productions and local quotas," he said, "We find that unless it's co-production and has global characters and global storylines, it's very difficult to put on primetime." As such, the Fremantle Corp is focusing more on co-productions with European networks to develop more products with international appeal, international awareness and an international cast.

Where genre is concerned, some executives remarked that among location-specific programs, it's the laughers that tend to fare the worst. "When we have comedies that are very local or that have a lot of political topics in them, that's been the most difficult," said Mexico-based Comarex's Marcel Vinay, Jr. However, a number of people also observed that it is the shows that break this rule that sometimes become runaway hits. The prime example given was U.S. sitcom *Seinfeld*, which has had a fantastic international run despite its New York City focus.

Unfortunately for distributors, *Seinfeld*-esque success stories are not the norm. "Comedy in general is the hardest for buyers," noted Ken Dubow, president of Tarzana, California-based Opus Distribution. In particular, Dubow pointed out that dark comedy can be challenging. Conversely, numerous execs were in agreement that physical comedy with a more visual style can transcend cultural differences, and has a chance in the international market. The perfect example, Dubow emphasized, is the enormous video screen outside the Palais at every MIPCOM and MIP-TV that broadcasts slapstick, pants-falling-down humor to market attendees around the clock. Point being, one doesn't need to know the language being spoken to understand a slip on a banana peel. Stephen Kelley of Toronto-based 9Story Entertainment perhaps put it best when he said, "Humor varies from country to country, and unless the comedy is very broad, it just will not travel."

Arnie Zipursky, CEO and president of Toronto-based CCI also tapped live action comedy, and added adult animation to the list. "On a mass level," he said, "There are too few time slots for adult animation, especially where the mainstream broadcasters are concerned." Beyond the networks specifically devoted to this sort of programming, such as U.S. channels Cartoon Network and to some extent Comedy Central, homes for adult cartoons are scarce.

When it came to comedy, however, not everyone interviewed was in agreement. Herb Lazarus, president of L.A.-based Carsey Werner Distribution was of the mind that genre isn't a major factor in selling a show. When asked what shows are tough to sell, he quipped, "Short answer: the bad ones." Lazarus explained that he holds no stock in the popular complaint that comedies are difficult. "The program is the program," he said, adding, "It has nothing to do with genre."

Indeed, one comedy that defied logic is *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, the 1990 NBC series with Will Smith that in some non-English-language territories is even now shown on prime time.

But comedies aren't the only types of shows that could put a frown on some sellers' faces. Other genres can be frustrating as well. Tom Devlin, the New York-based president of International Television Sales and Distribution at Los Angeles' Entertainment Studios, confessed that TV movies have given him some trouble in the past. "The concept of TV movies has fallen out of favor," he said. "Not many people subscribe to them, and the networks who were big purveyors decided that it was more valuable to put series in those time slots." And a similar phenomenon is happening, elaborated Devlin, in the world of Saturday and Sunday morning kids' programming.

Despite Devlin's less than optimistic outlook for TV movies, Opus' Dubow had the opposite to say. Dubow specializes in TV movies, and has found them to be a solid, consistent seller. "Telefilms are in demand," he said, "Especially women in jeopardy movies and Lifetime-style thrillers. People are buying them." More problematic for him are what he called "in between movies," which are not quite theatrical successes and not quite right for TV. Such films may have an indie sensibility and no big name stars to draw audiences.

Additionally, Dubow named documentary as another tough genre, though one hopes that events such as MIP-TV's MipDocs and Canadian documentary market HotDocs (both held annually in April) have done something to ease the difficulty of doc sales in recent years. Sabrina Eleuteri from Italy's RaiTrade likewise observed that documentaries are indeed a tough sell. For a good measure, Eleuteri also included animation, though she added that it depended on the territory.

Another idea that was echoed by a few execs is that programming with a religious or political bent can be tough. "Broadcasters worldwide want to protect themselves from promoting specific beliefs," NewsProNet's Cuddihy said. This of course does not apply to niche channels such as Odyssey Networks, who specialize in multi-denominational, faith-based programming.

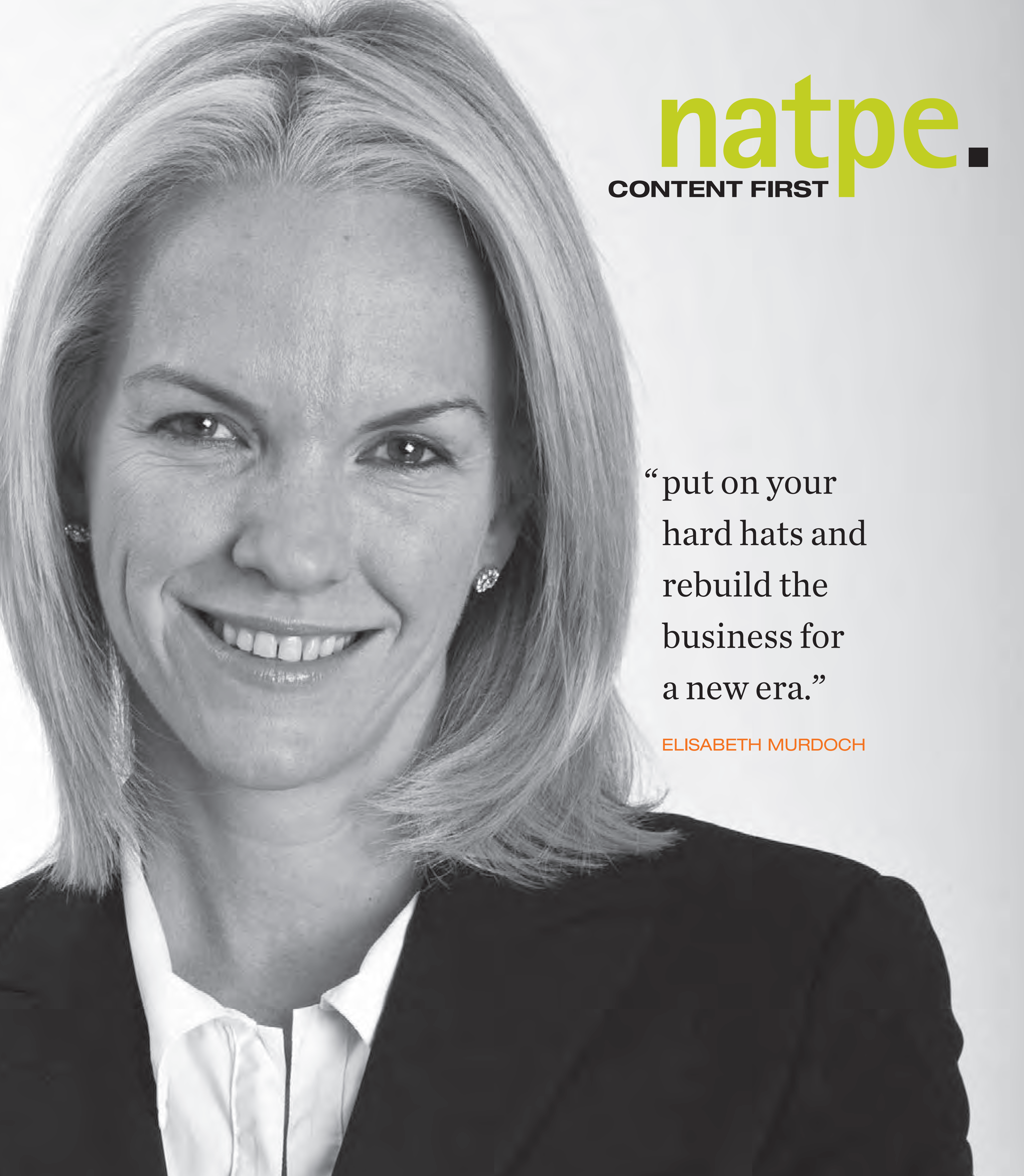
An executive who wished to remain anonymous also tapped late night-time talk shows, which, unlike their daytime counterparts like *Jerry Springer* and *Oprah*, struggle to appeal to buyers, even though it took many years to place *Oprah* in the U.K.

In some cases, there are other factors at work besides what audiences want to watch. In some countries content regulations dictate how much programming can be imported, creating yet another hurdle for sellers. For example, Kelley of 9Story explained that due to Canada's strict content regulations and access to all U.S. network shows, "It is hard for programs from the rest of the world to be sold here."

It follows that when heavily regulated countries do go looking for content, they prefer programs that have already been successful elsewhere. And some of those interviewed suggested that, regardless of regulatory laws, series that are proven hits are what buyers the world over look for anyway. Saralo MacGregor, the Santa Monica-based executive vice president of Worldwide Distribution for U.K.-based Fireworks International noted, "Broadcasters are continuing to carefully consider proven shows that offer elements such as a strong ratings history, well-known talent or established co-production partners." Marco Fernández de Araoz, director of International Acquisitions and Sales for Madrid-based Veralia, was in agreement: "In general terms, shows without a track record are the most difficult to sell anywhere." However, Fernández de Araoz asserted that the outlook is not too grim, "There is some light at the end of the TV tunnel, with the new digital terrestrial channels for low cost format sales."

Fernández de Araoz wasn't the only one touting the advantages of formats. Jon Kramer, CEO of Los Angeles-based Rive Gauche Entertainment noted that his company is working towards entering the format business, which has become one of the industry's most profitable sectors. As Fremantle's Holender put it, formats "have been the buying trend in the last 10 to 15 years."

Overall, as Jose Escalante, executive director of Miami-based Latin Media Corporation explained, "The process of selling TV programs is becoming more challenging everyday. It is not an easy process but one that you learn to do better year after year." As the TV market continues to expand around the world, the game of buying and selling will continue to evolve. The recent emphasis on local production has indelibly changed the industry, as countries no longer need or want to look to the world's big production hubs for their content. But despite the growing difficulty involved in selling certain types of programming, one thing is for sure: distribution executives will continue to make it look easy.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ELISABETH MURDOCH

Demanding Bosses

(Continued from Cover)

this story could be the 1980 movie, *Nine to Five*, with Jane Fonda. Not that the subject of "toughest bosses" is a rarity. Not too long ago the *Wall Street Journal* ran this headline: "New GM CEO: Brash, Blunt, Demanding," followed by a sub-head that concluded, "Others Wonder If His Style Is Unsettling." Between 1980 and 1993, *Fortune* magazine ran several features called "Ten Toughest Bosses in America."

After *VideoAge* circulated an informal survey among various international entertainment executives to identify their toughest bosses, one respondent remarked: "I am not sure I want to publicly contribute to this, but I would like to suggest maybe [*VideoAge* should] call it 'most demanding,' instead of 'toughest,' which carries the connotation that they are not effective or successful bosses, just hard to work for. I have worked for some of the smartest and most demanding CEO overachievers in the business. These bosses, in addition to being tough, create very exciting and challenging work environments and usually, more often than not, are very successful and demand excellence from all employees. When and if you get to celebrate in the end zone, you forget how hard you had to work to get there. On the other hand, when you are brutalized, are not successful and will never get to experience that success and celebration, then you are working for the wrong person."

During this *VideoAge* survey, an executive commented, "It's payback time!" Nonetheless, some of the tough and demanding executives still keep in touch with their former underlings. Stated another executive, "One common element (beyond the overwhelming competitive desire to succeed and to be very smart, in most cases) among them all is that, either they make you better or they get you out the door." Some called it "tough love," in the sense that if those tough bosses did not have respect for their subordinates, they could not survive long.

Some of the executives who participated in the survey considered it an honor and a privilege to make it onto the following list, to the point that a few volunteered (unsuccessfully) to be included, or suggested their own bosses.

For now, *VideoAge* managed to list 50 executives from 10 countries, many still active, others retired and some deceased. It's likely that an equal number were left out, since, considering a worldwide industry of 4,000 companies, demanding bosses make for a hefty 2.4 percent, possibly on par with other sectors. Significantly, left out were talent agents, financers, raiders, investors (e.g., Kirk Kerkorian), and some executives from France (e.g., Jean-Marie Messier), Canada (e.g., Edgar Bronfman, Jr.), Italy (e.g., Silvio Berlusconi), Brazil (e.g., Roberto Marinho), etc. This is because there is an incredibly large volume of books written about them, which makes the entertainment industry perhaps the most inspirational source of literature of any other industry. Also omitted were Japanese bosses because they're tough only by Western standards; to the Japanese *Sararīman*, their bosses are normal people.

Studio people were particularly edgy about this story, while independents, after an initial hesitation, became excited by the topic and began sputtering names left and right. Whenever possible, when anecdotes could not be verified or sounded implausible, we called the person directly. A few people are listed without notes, because, after being cited multiple times as tough bosses, respondents would not offer additional input. More peculiar information about the executives on this list is naturally available on the Internet.

Sadly, we had to erase from this list memories concerning a few TV executives (like Bill Feinschreiber Jr., president of Screen Gems International) because, after being named as demanding executives, we weren't able to gather any additional or substantiated information.

Finally, we mixed executives from different levels, such as owners, majority stockholders, group presidents and division presidents who, in one way or another, had an impact on the industry or, for good or bad, simply left a legacy or a mark.

Ailes, Roger: (1940-) Chairman of Fox Television Stations Group, Twentieth Television, MyNetwork TV and Fox Business Network. President of CNBC. Founded consulting firm Ailes Communications. Very politically active, right-wing Republican.

Called "the most vindictive man in media." He admitted, after having a tantrum, that he has been diagnosed as being paranoid.

Aubrey, Jim T.: (1918-1994) President of CBS TV Network and MGM. Nicknamed "the smiling cobra." He's described as a controlling man and workaholic with an "abrasive" personality and an "oversized" ego. Nevertheless, he did "his own dirty work," and made both CBS and MGM successful.

Azcarraga, Emilio M.: (1930-1997) Controlling shareholder of Mexico's Televisa, founder of Univision in the U.S. Nicknamed "El Tigre" (The Tiger), he was autocratic, aggressive and bold, but with a sense of humor. In his office he kept a chair so high that adults who sat in it could not touch the ground with their feet and so seemed childlike. Whenever he wanted to reprimand or belittle someone who worked for him, he was said to have offered a seat in the notorious chair. His philosophy was: "Television has the obligation to entertain [poor] people, to take them away from their sad reality and their difficult future. Rich people like me are not clients of television because we never go out to buy anything." There are several stories about his demand that *all* Televisa's employees wear a nametag. One of these stories recounted him promoting a gate guard to head of security because he demanded that, in order to enter the studio, Azcarraga had to show his nametag. He fired the head of security, who, when called to settle the matter, let Azcarraga enter without his nametag.

Baruch, Ralph: (1924-) Founder and CEO of Viacom. His executives would deliberately downgrade to coach if he were traveling on the same flight. He was "demanding, but never unreasonable."


Emilio Milmo Azcarraga of Mexico's Televisa

Burns, Lloyd: (1910-1970) President of Screen Gems International. A Canadian living in New York, he was called an "innovator who yelled all the time." He created in the late '50s one of the largest networks of local offices worldwide, which was even able to do direct syndication in Brazil. Burns was also the scrooge of middle men.

Chevry, Bernard: (1922-) Founder and owner of MIP-TV and MIPCOM in Cannes, France, until he sold out both TV trade shows. A volatile man, he would challenge anyone. At the height of his power, he could be vindictive, but business came first.


Bernard Chevry of France's MIP-TV and MIPCOM

Chisholm, Sam: (1939-) Chief executive and managing director of Australia's Channel Nine Network. Left Nine in 1990 to become managing director at BSkyB. Chairman of Foxtel, director at Kerry Packer's PBL. Appointed executive director of Nine again in 2005. His biggest fights were with program distributors. Ruthless in firing employees at BSkyB. A tough man, he survived a double lung transplant.


S.H. (Sam) Chisholm of Australia and U.K. master of pay-TV

Cohn, Harry: (1891-1958) President, Columbia Pictures. He was said to have a foolproof device for judging whether a picture was good or bad. "[If] my fanny squirms, it's bad. If my fanny doesn't squirm, it's good. It's as simple as that." Called "White Fang," he was thought of as ruthless and vulgar, and he inspired fear.

Davis, Martin: (1927-1999) CEO of Paramount. Chairman of Gulf and Western. Listed by *Fortune* magazine as one of the *Ten Toughest Bosses in America*: "One of the most volatile personalities in the entertainment industry's executive ranks." In 1986, he told *The New York Times*: "If I'm considered a tough manager, I think it is accurate; I won't object. I am demanding. I want team players, I want results."

Davis, Marvin: (1925-2004) Owner of the Pebble Beach Company, the Aspen Ski Company and the Beverly Hills Hotel. Owner of 20th Century Fox. He purchased Fox with junk bonds issued by Michael Milken. His partner at the time was Marc Rich — the fugitive who fled the U.S. and was later pardoned by President Bill Clinton after Marc Rich's wife made a major contribution to the Clinton Library. Marvin Davis wanted to sell the valuable land that is the Fox lot in Beverly Hills and move Fox to the Santa Monica airport. Fortunately, the economy was so bad then and interest rates were so high that the deal fell through. Fox was just another "asset" to him.

Diller, Barry: (1942-) Chairman and CEO of IAC/InterActiveCorp. Created Fox Broadcasting, chairman and CEO of USA Broadcasting, chairman of QVC. Known for "The Killer Dillers," whom he mentored and who later became successful execs (including: Michael Eisner, Dawn Steel and Don Simpson). He didn't only challenge

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Demanding Bosses

(Continued from Page 54)

his employees, but other companies' execs as well. Once, at the Cannes Film Festival, when Harvey Weinstein spotted Diller, then the chief executive of Vivendi Universal, Weinstein called out in a loud voice, "Why'd you call me a bully?" "You are a bully," Diller replied, and the two stood toe to toe on the terrace of the Hotel du Cap, as an audience of actors, directors and fellow-executives watched, expecting a fist fight.

Barry Diller created many other demanding bosses

Dolgen, Jon: (1945-) Chairman of Viacom Entertainment Group, senior advisor to Viacom, principal of Wood River Ventures. Jonathan Dolgen has won a reputation in Hollywood as an executive who insists on slashing budgets and fiscal responsibility, and who can be almost ruthless in his pursuit of black ink. He reportedly always has pads of paper, cigarettes, antacids, aspirin, and a can of Diet Coke at his place setting, and during meetings usually arrives at least 30 minutes after his potential adversary has been seated — and stewing. Dolgen also has no qualms about raising his voice.

Eisner, Michael: (1942-) Hired by Barry Diller at ABC, president and COO of Paramount Pictures, chairman and CEO of Disney. After he left Disney, Eisner founded the Tornante Company to invest in and develop companies and the entertainment/media sector. Fond of micromanagement, his business style is fully described in *DisneyWar*, a 2005 book by James B. Stewart on Eisner's 20-year tenure at Disney.

Franci, Michele G.: (1904-1991) President of Milan Fair, founder of MIFED, the world's first film-TV market. Autocratic and demanding. He did not have a driver's license, but insisted on telling his chauffeur how to drive. For him, security guards used the military salute. Extremely honest, he remained relatively poor.

Michele G. Franci of Italy's MIFED, the world's first audiovisual market

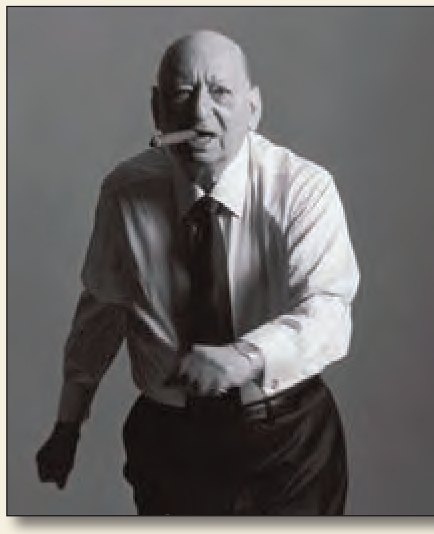
Frank, Sandy: (1929-) Owner of Sandy Frank Entertainment. Reportedly, he jumped up and down on U.K. TV buyer Leslie Halliwell's desk and screamed at him during one negotiation. The New York *Daily News* reported that he can be "incredibly intense, a fabled dealmaker and a colorful character who once forced a plane to land by feigning a heart attack to get into a meeting."

Franklin, Ralph C.: (1920-) President of MCA TV Int'l. When mentioned to Franklin that he was voted one of the toughest bosses, he replied, "Yeah, I know, but don't forget that I was working for the toughest of them all: Lew Wasserman."

Golan, Menahem: (1929-) Israeli producer and co-founder of Golan-Globus film distribution company and the Cannon Group. An aggressive salesman, he reportedly sold the rights to his films to different theatrical and video distributors in many territories before the film was finished, and sometimes, before it was even started.

Menahem Golan, veteran Israeli filmmaker

Grade, Lew: (1906-1998) Founder of ITC in London with brother Leslie Grade, and Val Parnell and Prince Littler, deputy managing director of Associated Television. Once, an argument over program prices led to Lew Grade writing U.S. ABC-TV executive Howard Thomas a check for a penny, which Thomas cashed. Grade never held a grudge, and the arguments he had with Thomas didn't stop Grade from liking him.



Lew Grade of U.K.'s ITC (photo from the cover book of "The Life of Lew Grade")

Haimovitz, Jules: (1952-) President and CEO of Viacom, president of MGM, director of Blockbuster. He knows his business and how to get things done.

Hill, Len: (1947-) Producer, executive, 1976 VP of movies for TV at ABC. In 1980, he formed Hill/Mandelker Films with producer Phil Mandelker. Co-founded ACI with seven other producer partners. Said to be very committed to the independent producers concept and its community.

Jobs, Steve: (1955-) In 1993 *Fortune* magazine called him one of "America's roughest, toughest, most intimidating bosses."

Kirch, Leo: (1926-) Founded Beta Film in 1959 and Kirch Gruppe in Munich, Germany. He fought bankers, suppliers, competitors, politicians and regulators.

Leo Kirch of Germany's Kirch Gruppe

King, Roger M.: (1944-2007) CEO of King World Productions, CEO of CBS Worldwide Sales. A master salesman, he was known for reaching out his hand to newcomers in the industry. But, as it has been reported, "He did silly, stupid stuff that was fueled by alcohol and substance abuse." At close to two meters tall and weighing over 110 kg, he was physically imposing as well.

Lefcovich, Raul: (1922-1997) President of Viacom Int'l. Demanding and severe. He liked to "push the envelope," and "second guess" his people.

McGregor, Charlie: (1934-2008) President, Warner Bros. Television. After he and Channel 4 buyer (and film historian) Leslie Halliwell had a real screaming match over the phone, Leslie sent Charlie the following telex: "Dear Charlie, following our conversation I consulted my doctor, and he informs me that your suggestion is a physical impossibility." At TV trade shows, McGregor used to call sales meetings at 2:00a.m., and when all were assembled, he cancelled the meetings.

Milius, John F.: (1944-) Movie director. He's quoted as saying "A lot of people thought of me as a threat to Western civilization," and "I've always had trouble with authority."

Morin, Bobby: (1926-2010) President 20th Century Fox Worldwide Syndication. President, Lorimar Productions. Described as having a Napoleonic attitude.

Murdoch, Rupert: (1931-) Founder and CEO of News Corporation. Nicknamed "The Shark," he's considered an "equal opportunity fear," for unions, politicians (of all sides), regulators, employees and competitors.

Nardino, Gary: (1935-1998) Headed TV division of Paramount Studios. CEO and chairman of Orion Television Entertainment. Co-president of North Hall Productions.

Reportedly, some of the horror stories about him were outlined in his eulogy.

Packer, Kerry: (1937-2005) Major shareholder of Publishing and Broadcasting Limited, which owns Channel Nine TV network and pay-TV channels, and the Australian Consolidated Press. Tough and demanding. Once, during an interview with this writer, his timorous executives were afraid he'd chew the journalist up.

Surprisingly, his "10-minutes allowed interview" lasted for two full hours.

Kerry Packer of Australia's Nine Network

Parretti, Giancarlo: (1942-) In 1989, the Italian financier took over Cannon Film Group. His plans to take over French studio Pathé were blocked by the French government. Parretti bought MGM in 1990, using money borrowed from a Dutch subsidiary of France's Crédit Lyonnais and financing

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Demanding Bosses

(Continued from Page 56)

the acquisition from Kirk Kerkorian. Published reports in *Business Week* and *Newsweek* suggest that he had ties to organized crime, which he denied. He fired most of MGM's accounting staff and appointed his 21-year-old daughter to a senior financial post. He used company money to buy presents for several girlfriends. His reign at MGM became the basis for the film *Get Shorty*, which was produced by MGM. In 1991 his ownership dissolved in a flurry of lawsuits and a default by Crédit Lyonnais. Parretti faced securities fraud charges in the U.S. and Europe. In March 1999, he was found guilty of misuse of corporate funds and fraud and was sentenced in absentia to four years in prison.

Perenchio, Jerrold A.: (1930-) Chairman, Univision. He shuns press attention, is famously generous, but can be tough-minded, even ruthless. He's an excellent negotiator (he trained under Lew Wasserman), is described as intense and persistent, (and according to the L.A. *Times*, "mercurial") understands and likes numbers, and is detail-oriented. He is renowned for relying on his gut instinct. After selling Univision, he became the world's 400th richest man.

Jerrold A. Perenchio of Univision Spanish-language TV network in the U.S.

Puttnam, David: (1941-) Chairman and CEO of Columbia Pictures. Criticized for having a condescending attitude toward the Hollywood film industry. Didn't become vice-chairman of BBC because at a conference of the Royal Television Society, he criticized BBC for reducing its support for the National Film and Television School courses.

Redstone, Sumner: (1923-) Chairman and CEO, Viacom. Redstone laid it all out in a 2001 book he co-wrote with Peter Knobler, *A Passion To Win*, where he said he took "punishing criticism for my executive management decisions." He also wrote that he takes "what is said about me and the company personally."

Saban, Haim: (1944-) Israeli and American (dual) citizen. Founder of Saban Entertainment, chairman and

Haim Saban, Univision's boss

part owner of Univision. He's described as a "force of nature." On the strength of his six spoken languages, he's said never to take no for an answer.

Sheinberg, Sid: (1935-) President and COO at MCA under Lew Wasserman. Museum of Television and Radio vice chairman, runs Bubble Factory Studios (an independent production company). Called "an iron-fisted czar."

Simpson, Don: (1943-1996) Film producer, screenwriter, actor, executive at Paramount and Warner Bros. Called "abrasive." A chapter in the book *You'll Never Make Love in This Town Again* discusses his preferences for S&M and videotaping sessions. Simpson was found dead in his home in Los Angeles due to cardiac arrest from combined drug intoxication. According to *High Concept*, a Simpson biography by reporter Charles Fleming, Simpson's prescription drug expenses were over $60,000 a month at the time of his death. His job as an executive at Paramount Pictures came to an end when he allegedly passed out in the middle of a meeting. Simpson's temper was as notorious as his vanity (he was constantly tempted to act in his own films).

Solomon, Michael J.: (1938-) President of Telepictures, Lorimar, Warner Bros. TV Int'l. A very demanding boss and a good promoter. He'd surely be offended if he weren't on this list. According to legend, while selling programs for United Artists (and, later for MCA) he used to travel to Central America with a Colt-45. Even the press was afraid of him. During the early days of Telepictures (which he co-founded) he used to host press luncheons at MIP-TV in conflict with the market's major event, and he used to take note of who did not attend (or sent a junior person), so that the publication would be cut from his large ad budget.

Steel, Dawn: (1946-1997) Paramount VP of Production, later became Production chief. President of Columbia Pictures. At Paramount she was nicknamed "Hell on heels," and "Queen of Mean." She changed secretaries on a monthly basis. Worked for Disney as well.

Stenbeck, Jan: (1942-2002) Chairman of Sweden's Modern Times Group. He was known to fire managers if their ideas did not make money. "When things go well, he's very inspiring. But when they don't, it's not so entertaining," is how he is described.

Stone, Robert L.: (1922-2009) COO Columbia Pictures. In 1980, *Fortune* magazine named him "one of the 10 toughest bosses to work for."

Turner, Ted: (1938-) His full name is Robert Edward Turner III. Sufficient to mention his top posts at CNN, TBS, MGM and Time Warner. In 1986, *Fortune* magazine wrote that he's, "so wildly unorthodox that even some admirers regard him as slightly crazy," and that, "he has a terrible temper." But, he's also described as a "visionary" and an "adventurer." Turner described himself best in his 2008 book, *Call Me Ted*. His leadership style didn't suit Time Warner's huge bureaucracy, and after the merger with AOL, he was famously fired from his post. Turner wrote about his bipolar depression; his violent, alcoholic father (who killed himself); his multiple failed marriages; and the need to be away from his family.

Wasserman, Lew: (1913-2002) MCA chairman. Wasserman was unkind to both stars and executives when he no longer needed their services. As Frank Rose put it in a 1995 *Los Angeles Times* profile, "The legendary rages would begin with an ominous tapping of the letter opener and proceed to a fury so total that it could leave a grown man in a $1,500 suit hugging the toilet in fear." Supposedly, some executives vomited or fainted during Wasserman's tantrums. Wasserman did not like when people were late for appointments. Once, he and his wife waited for future U.S. president Ronald Reagan and wife Nancy to join them at a restaurant for dinner, and he was visibly angry.

Weinstein, Harvey (1952-) and **Bob** (1954-): Founders of Miramax. According to *Fortune* magazine, brothers "Bob and Harvey can trigger fear and anxiety in their people."

Welch, John (Jack) Jr.: (1935-) Chairman and CEO of GE. Nicknamed "Neutron Jack." Stephen Tormey, who negotiates the United Electrical Workers contract for GE employees said, "[To him] the workers are considered lemons, and they are squeezed really dry." During his tenure, GE's market value grew from $13 billion to $500 billion.

Yablans, Frank: (1935-) President of Paramount, MGM/UA. In a 1974 profile, *Time* magazine called him an "autocratic studio boss" who "enjoys his reputation for toughness." He's quoted as saying: "It's easy to be humble if you were born a prince. I came from a ghetto."

Frank Yablans enjoyed being tough

Zavoli, Sergio: (1923-) Chairman of Italy's RAI. The most arrogant RAI chairman in state broadcaster history. A radical-chic leftist.

Znaimer, Moses: (1942-) One of Canada's most demanding bosses. Co-founded and headed City-TV. Outspoken, a showman and a businessman who was impatient with his staff. He has been described thus: "Hefneresque quest for eternal mojo — the magical, sexy power he's famous for: media visionary, wheeler-dealer." He said to the *Globe and Mail*: "I take a little offence when people call me a businessman. I'm rather an artiste of media."

Moses Znaimer, Canada's most amusing tough TV boss created City-TV

Zucker, Jeff: (1965-) President and CEO of NBC Universal, president of the NBC Universal TV Group, president of the Entertainment, News & Cable Group and president of NBC Entertainment. Executive producer of *Today* and *NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw*. He has been with NBC his entire career.

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U.S. Studios Int'l TV Pie

(Continued from Cover)

account for over 80 percent of the annual $15 billion world TV sales. The way the pie is divided among the six major U.S. studios is difficult to gauge, but from the BO receipts and from a glimpse at the statements made in *VideoAge* MIPCOM Daily's Q&A with the studios' heads of TV distribution, we estimated that Warner Bros. tops the list with 19 percent, followed by Fox with 18 percent. After that comes Disney at 17 percent, Sony Pictures with 16 percent, NBC-Universal with 12 percent. The combined CBS-Paramount could bring their share to 18 percent, but individually it has been an insurmountable challenge.

By using last year's U.S. BO figures as a point of comparison, the accurate ranking among the major six studios was:

Warner Bros. — 23.96 percent
20th Century Fox (including Searchlight) — 18.79 percent
Paramount — 16.8 percent
Sony Pictures — 16.57 percent
Disney — 13.98 percent
NBC-Universal — 9.87 percent.
Cumulatively, the six studios grossed $8,785.6 million at the U.S. BO.

In terms of growth, Fox's Marion Edwards commented, "When something happens like the U.K. stops buying, which they did a few years ago, it's not like some other market in a developing region will rise up and replace that revenue. International distribution is a balancing act of trying to grow up the smaller markets while maintaining the larger markets. I'm happy to say that we're on a pretty healthy trend going into MIPCOM. On top of that, growth will come from growing these other business, online, on demand and new media ventures."

Keith LeGoy, president, International Distribution, Sony Pictures TV, said, "While the big Western European markets such as the U.K., France, Germany, Italy and Spain feature strongly at MIPCOM, we're very excited with ever-growing broadcast markets in Central and Eastern Europe and across Latin America, the Middle East and Asia."

Ben Pyne, president, Global Distribution, Disney Media Networks, confirmed, "There are some developing territories — Central Europe, Russia, Southern Europe, the Middle East and so forth — where there is continued growth potential."

The full interviews with the studio presidents will be available in *VideoAge*'s MIPCOM Daily and, later on *VideoAge*'s Water Cooler online feature. Overall, the picture looks really rosy for the U.S. studios. The Walt Disney Co. reported a 40 percent rise in profit, climbing from $954 million in 2009 to $1.33 billion in the third quarter of this year. The company collected an operating income of $123 million, a welcome change since it lost $12 million a year earlier. In addition, revenue for the three-month period that ended on July 3 registered a 16 percent increase from last year at $10 billion. Total revenue for the nine months was $28.32 billion, an eight percent increase from the previous year.

Disney's cable network revenue rose from $2.56 billion to $3.28 billion, a 28 percent increase for the third quarter, and operating income rose a whopping 50 percent to $1.67 million. However, the broadcast group's operating income rose only two percent to $209 million, and advertising barely recorded any increase.

On the other hand, Time Warner credited a strong advertising market for its recent jumps in revenue. Second-quarter net income rose seven percent to $562 million and revenue jumped to $6.37 billion, an eight percent leap. For the six month period that ended June 30, total revenues were $12.7 billion, compared to $11.9 billion in 2009.

Revenue for Time Warner's network group, including HBO, the pay cable network, increased 11 percent to $3.17 billion. Subscriptions fees, which cable and satellite operators pay to carry Time Warner's cable channel, registered at $1.85 billion, a nine percent increase

Like Disney and Time Warner, CBS Corporation reported higher earnings, likely due to the economic recovery. CBS recorded earnings of $150.1 million in the second quarter, which have climbed from $15.4 million in the same period the year before. Revenue increased by 11 percent to $3.33 billion. These earnings suggest that local advertisers are beginning to spend more, after spending dropped in 2008 and 2009. According to CBS, advertising at its local broadcasting unit increased by 17 percent since last year. In general, local broadcasting revenues rose from $578 million last year to $678 million this year. Political ads are contributing to this increase in advertising revenues, and they are expected to play an even larger role as the election draws nearer. Ad revenues for CBS were up five percent as a result of the March Madness basketball finals.

The entertainment division saw a climb in revenues to $1.67 billion, up from $1.52 billion. These revenues increased after CBS sold *CSI*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, and *The Good Wife* internationally. The international sale of TV shows is credited for helping the entertainment unit's 10 percent increase from last year.

Adding to the gains is the fact that CBS also made successful efforts to lower costs and reduce debt. The company is rebuilding its websites in hopes of earning more money from online advertisements. In New York, the WCBS TV station and the WINS, WCBS and WFAN radio stations will feed into one website.

CBS recently announced a 10-year carriage agreement with Comcast, the country's largest cable operator, that included retransmission fees for CBS-owned TV stations. ●


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TV biz in the U.K.

(Continued from Cover)

events including Martin Scorsese's imminent crime drama *Boardwalk Empire*. The daily *Guardian* valued the deal at £150 million (U.S.$240 million).

With the volume of deals announced last June between NBC Universal and ITV, and also Warner and Channel 5, it would be easy to conclude that the U.K. is indeed a vibrant market for foreign content partners. Easy, but not necessarily accurate.

Such out and out pickups are, in fact, increasingly rare; and bald statistics, as is often the case with such mendacious creatures, can be very deceptive.

Sasha Breslau, ITV's head of Acquired Series acknowledged that, "Aside from the occasional series from Canada and Australia, we tend to buy most of our films and series from the U.S." She added, "We also buy a good deal of U.K. originated programming, particularly for ITV3." The truth of this is underlined by her estimate that ITV3's acquired programming represents 23 percent of the net's schedule, a figure that jumps to 90 percent when U.K. acquisitions are included.

Breslau also noted that on ITV1, acquired programming accounts for about 16 percent of the schedule, 35 percent on ITV2 and "between 75 and 80 percent on ITV4." Combined, this adds up to a total of 10,150 hours of programming. However, it is very important to note that this impressive sounding figure represents the number of hours of acquired programming played per annum, not acquired per annum. Additionally, it also includes U.K. acquisitions, many of which are

Channel Five's Jeff Ford

Nick U.K.'s Debbie Macdonald

from companies that used to be ITV franchise holders.

Jeff Ford, managing director, Digital Channels and Acquisitions at Channel Five (renamed from Five following its acquisition at the end of July by newspaper baron Richard Desmond) estimated the percentage of acquired programming across the three channels for which he has responsibility as 100 percent for Five U.S., 60 percent for Fiver and, "between 40 and 45 percent for the main channel's schedule." This figure would seem to be very encouraging. Until, that is, Ford added, "Obviously, it is in the nature of the Five U.S. that it is 100 percent acquired programming, but the factors that determine the level of acquired programming on the other two channels are, in the case of Fiver, the amount of programming that is made available from the main channel. This, in turn, is mainly determined by contractual considerations, and in the case of the main channel, the level of acquired programming is mainly determined by [U.K. TV authority] OFCOM." In other words, when commissioning U.K. productions for Channel Five, the company's preferred option is, where possible, to make one program and show it on Channel Five and again on Fiver. Thus, the company will only acquire programming for the digital channel, where the cost of such acquisition is lower than the extra fee the company would have to pay a U.K. producer to cover the transmission rights for both Channel Five and Fiver.

Nonetheless, it is true that, as Ford put it, "Acquired programming is part of Channel Five's DNA," and with an annual acquisition, per Ford, "of between 600 and 700 hours a year across all three channels," this certainly makes Channel Five a major player in the acquired program market.

Both the BBC and Channel 4 have recently announced cuts in acquired programming, although it's only just starting to kick in at the BBC where, in 2009, the spend on acquired programming was £106.5 million ($170 million) a 2.2 percent drop of £2.2 million ($3.5 million) from the 2008 figure of £108.7 ($166.5 million). These figures suggest an overall current market value of £600–£650 ($960 million – 1 billion). Whatever the size of the market, for some time now, the cabsat market has been its backbone, but even here, the garden is not as rosy as the HBO/BSkyB deal might suggest.

Michael Carrington, children's chief content officer at Cartoon Network, operator of three channels, said that, "Acquired programming accounts for around 20 percent of Cartoon Network's schedule, 50 percent of Boomerang's and 95 percent of Cartoonito's," before revealing that these impressive looking percentages actually represent "around 150 hours per year across all three channels."

Debbie Macdonald, VP Programming at rival kids' cabsat operator Nick U.K. said, "The financial climate has affected the production sector, and we're being pitched shows that have been in the market for a long time and are seeing very few new ideas. As a result, channels have been turning to acquisitions to feed the schedule." She went on to add, "As the market continues to pick up, I would hope to see some new creative input at MIPCOM this year with broadcasters in a better position to commit." Macdonald's colleague at Viacom's Comedy Central, acquisitions and commissioning manager Shoshana Wilson, remarked that in the past year, "We have bought around 50 hours of brand new content, ranging from new series like *30 Rock* and new episodes of returning favorites such as *2 1/2 Men*, to movies and stand up."

Of course, it is true that comedy is particularly parochial, but still, 50 hours a year is not a huge volume, especially when it includes series such as *Live at the Apollo* and *Michael Mcintyre's Roadshow*, both BBC productions.

In fact, Comedy Central's acquisitions illustrate neatly, if in microcosm, the truth about the U.K. acquisitions market overall. If you strip out acquisitions

Cartoon Network's Michael Carrington

> *"The financial climate has affected the production sector, and we're being pitched shows that have been in the market for a long time and are seeing very few new ideas. As a result, channels have been turning to acquisitions to feed the schedule.*

from the U.S., which amounts mostly to the Hollywood majors, and acquisitions from U.K. producers of shows initially commissioned for use on another U.K. broadcaster, very little is purchased by U.K. broadcasters. And, while all the buyers agreed that the acquired content market had remained stable for the past 18 months or so, Channel Five's Ford sees opportunities for content sellers in the U.K. shrinking in the immediate future. "The key trend in the U.K. acquired program market," he asserted, "is consolidation. The recent tie up between Virgin Media and Sky is a case in point. Clearly having all those channels in one place will make the new entity an acquisitions powerhouse." Cartoon Network's Carrington also agreed that consolidation is a factor, noting, "Prices are stable, but I think the recession has had a lot to do with that, with a number of the smaller players disappearing, and those that are around tending to be much more conservative."

By contrast, Ford believes, "Prices for some mid-range content are increasing," although he went on to caution, "We are not seeing the top prices that were being paid a few years ago." And even current headline grabbing acquisitions, such as the HBO/BSkyB deal at £150 million ($240 million) over five years pale in comparison with the £1 billion ($1.6 billion) BSkyB agreed to pay in February 2009 for a three year deal on most, but not all, of the Premier League fixtures.

Seeing figures like these sitting side by side, it is difficult to reach any conclusion other than that acquired programming, in strictly dollar terms, is a smaller and smaller part of an increasingly complex U.K. market.


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My Two Cents

Let's talk for a minute about what I call the "Business of Obsolescence," one of the largest social, economical and environmental disasters in modern history.

"We're not perfect," is how Apple's Steve Jobs justified the technical problems of the iPhone4, which has been for sale in the U.S. and a few other countries since last June, while 18 other regions were added a month later. It should be noted that the previous version had only been retailing since June 2009. The iPhone3 requires a SIM identity card, whereas the iPhone4 needs a micro-SIM.

Many people were outraged over the iPhone4's technical problems, but no one seemed to be upset about the very reason that the new device ought to exist at all.

On the contrary, some newspapers even ran divertive stories like "Survey finds that iPad users are selfish."

Why is it necessary to produce a new electronic device when technology would have allowed us to update the previous version? And this also goes for the whole series of "pods," "pads," "kindles," "nooks," "droids," "streaks" and other smartphones.

This rant is not against progress and innovation, but only against the business of obsolescence. Have you ever wondered why a radio built in the '40s still works, while a computer purchased four years ago is now obsolete?

Years ago there were powerful and effective committees for standardization that assured compatibility, high quality and durability. These characteristics allowed for the creation of a service sector, like technicians who repaired radios and televisions, thus putting rationality into the consumer process. This never happened with computers and other IT devices, because they become unusable before they have a chance to break.

The business of obsolescence was created at the disadvantage of the consumer and society as a whole. It happened under today's absent watch of regulatory authorities and ineffective consumer organizations. It was made possible with the support of politicians connected to the IT industry and the press, a willing accomplice due to the fact that every device's new version is launched with a rich advertising campaign.

It's a universal remote for TV, cable and IPTV. Plus: cellphone...computer... digital camera...fax machine...scanner... MP3 player...

Now, one could ask, "What does this obsolescence have to do with the television business?" Plenty, I'd say, for an industry with vision and far-sight. Nothing for those near-sighted. Plenty for those who want to leave a legacy. Nothing for those who will vanish with their first retirement check.

Keep in mind that in a few years, television will be consumed from devices that will basically be computers. If we don't return to the good ole days of standardization, compatibility and rationalization, the audience will be fragmented in such a way that will make any business model for content unprofitable.

The erosion of political power caused by money poured by "special interest" into election campaigns, has permitted the creation of this business model where companies generate profits primarily with obsolescence. And this extends even to accessories, such as telephone chargers that do not work for different models made by the same brand.

Recently, the European Commission finally established that at least all types of cell phone chargers must be compatible (basically with the same plugs) so that consumers don't have to replace a functioning cell phone only because the manufacturer has stopped producing that specific phone charger that broke down.

If it cannot be eradicated, just reducing the business of obsolescence would cut down both the expenses of purchasing new electronic apparatus, and the pollution caused by millions and millions of discarded devices (e-waste) of which, at the most, only 20 percent is recyclable.

Perhaps it's too late, but let's hope for the consumer's good sense, helped by a possible revival of the public-service role of politicians to reject obsolescence. These developments would push towards the restoration of standards committees, under the vigilant eyes of controlling authorities. Naturally, this is the equivalent of declaring open war, similar to the front that President Obama opened against Wall Street (about 150 people left the financial regulatory agencies to openly become lobbyists) and the oil industry. Who knows, if we were to win the war against the business of obsolescence, there could also be hope to win against speculators and the food lobby.

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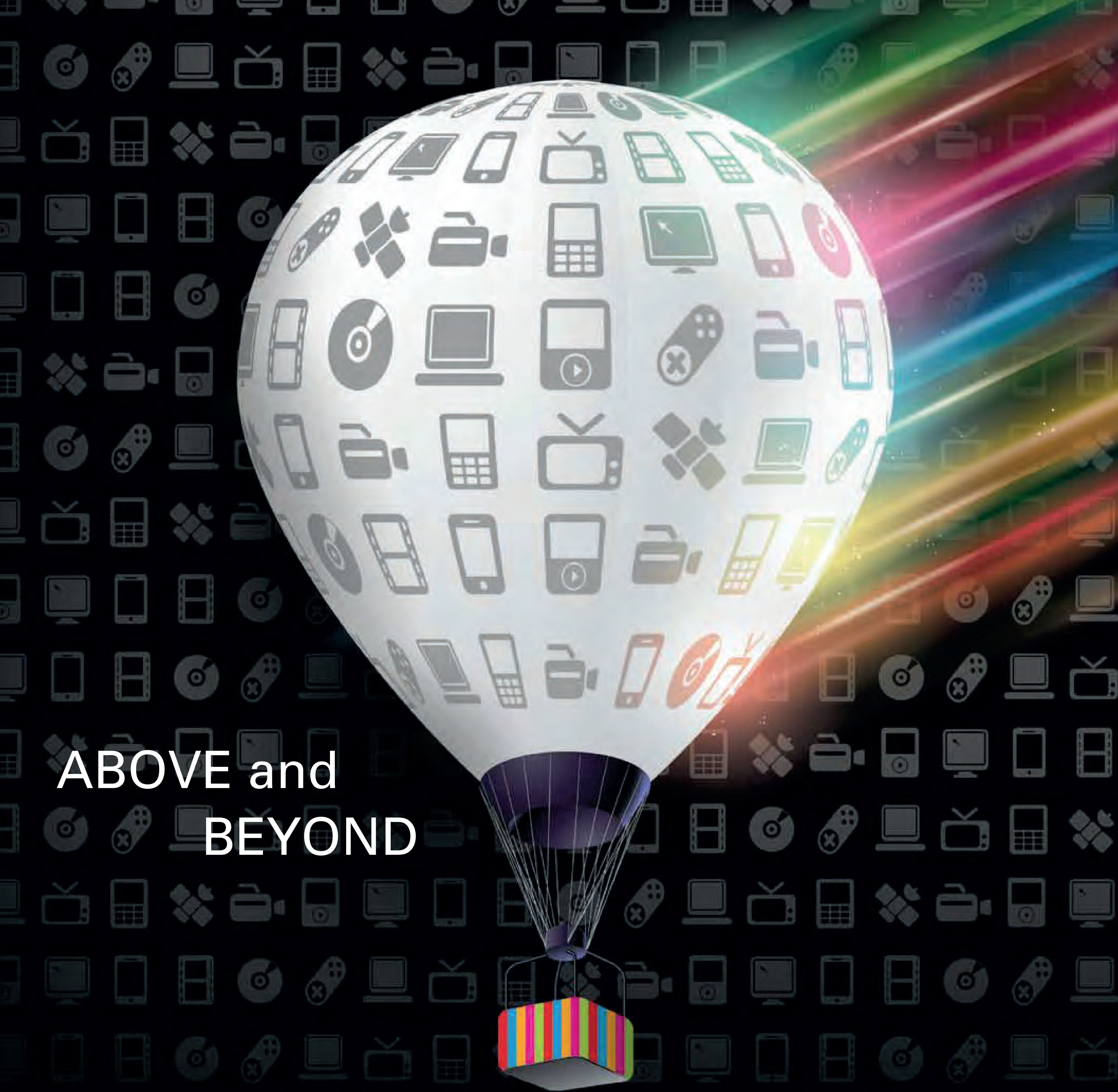
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